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Collins - Human Liberty - 1890

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BY
ANTHONY COLLINS.

REPRINTED
WITH PREFACE AND ANNOTATIONS

By G. W. FOOTE.

AND BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION

By J. M. WHEELER.

LONDON
PROGRESSIVE PUBLISHING COMPANY,
28 STONECUTTER STREET, E.C.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

HAVING resolved to reprint Anthony Collins's little treatise on Liberty and Necessity—or, as it is now called, Free Will and Determinism—I asked my friend and colleague, Mr. J. M. Wheeler, to supply a biographical introduction. He has an intimate knowledge of eighteenth-century Freethought and Freethinkers in England, and his introduction does justice to one who as a man, as well as a philosopher, deserves a better fate than oblivion or neglect.

Many years ago I picked up a copy of Collins's essay on a London street-bookstall, and I was struck with its power and lucidity. He was the opposite of a mystagogue. Constitutionally averse to the great school of learned and super-subtle metaphysicians, he never raised a dust and complained he could not see. He thought clearly—perhaps because he thought freely—and expressed himself in the same manner. Whoever fails to understand Collins, fails from inability to follow an abstract argument.

Collins does not use a superfluous word, he goes straight to the heart of the matter, and is careless of adornment. M. Fonsegrive, in his learned and laborious *Essai sur le Libre Arbitre, sa Théorie et son Histoire*, remarks that "like other popularisers of impiety, Collins invented no new argument; he borrowed from here and there, and gave simplicity and clearness to the arguments of professional philosophers." But who is able to invent a new argument on such a well-threshed topic? The lasting merit of Collins is that he gave an inimitable bird's-eye view of the whole territory in dispute. This,

indeed, M. Fonsegrive admits, for he observes that Collins's "work is interesting to study, as it resumes all the determinist arguments which obtained among enlightened Freethinkers."

This edition has been reprinted verbatim—Latin and all—from the original, with the following exceptions. A few corrections have been made from the "errata" and the "supplement to the errata," and the list of "contents" has been omitted, while the marginal summaries have been turned into headings after the fashion of Dr. Priestley's reprint. The original punctuation has not always been adhered to, nor has the old printer been followed in his lavish use of italics.

A few footnotes have been supplied where I thought they would assist the ordinary reader, or put him on his guard. Some of the writers referred to in the text were familiar enough to eighteenth-century readers, but they are now fallen dim; and Collins, writing as a Deist, and naturally anxious to repel the then terrible suspicion of Atheism, as well perhaps as to enmesh the "theologers" in their own net, rather overpressed his advantages from the free-will tendency of ancient "atheists" and the necessitarian tendency of Stoic philosophers and Christian divines. Other reasons for giving the present-day reader a little help will appear in the footnotes themselves. I have only to add that such footnotes are marked with my initials.

Should this reprint meet with a reasonable success, it will be followed by other reprints of valuable works of the older Freethinkers. In any case I cannot lose the satisfaction of having put Collins's masterpiece within the reach of liberal readers, some of whom will prize it and thank me for my pains.

G. W. FOOTE.

April 20th, 1890.

ANTHONY COLLINS AND HIS WORKS.

By J. M. WHEELER.

THE father of English Freethought, whose chief philosophical work is here reprinted, was the son of Henry Collins, a gentleman of fortune, and was born at Heston, near Hounslow, Middlesex, on June 21, 1676. He was educated at Eton and King's College, Cambridge. Upon leaving the University he became for a while student in the Temple, but showed a greater predilection for literature and philosophy than for law, although his studies were of after service to him as a magistrate. His fortune enabled him to gratify his tastes. He had, too, the pleasure of cultivating the friendship of John Locke, between whom and himself much correspondence ensued. In an early letter, dated Oct. 29, 1703, Locke says: "Believe it, my good friend, to love truth for truth's sake, is the principal part of human perfection in this world, and the seed-plot of all other virtues; and, if I mistake not, you have as much of it as ever I met with in anybody." In many other letters Locke speaks of his affectionate regard for his young friend and disciple, who became one of the trustees of his will. In a letter, written Aug. 23, 1704, four days before his death, he says: "By my will, you will see I had some kindness for . . . And I knew no better way to take care of him than to put him, and what I designed for him, into your hands and management. The knowledge I have of your virtues of all kinds secures the trust which, by your permission, I have placed in you, and the peculiar esteem and love I have observed in the young man for you, will dispose him to be ruled and influenced by you, so of that I need say nothing. May you live long and happy, in the enjoyment of health, freedom, content, and all those blessings

which Providence has bestowed on you, and your virtues entitled you to. I know you loved me living, and will preserve my memory now I am dead." Locke evidently looked on Collins as the man who would carry on the torch of truth when it had fallen from his own hand. And this position Collins endeavored to fulfil, though it may be doubted if the master would have approved of the direction taken by the disciple.

Locke, in his *Reasonableness of Christianity*, published in 1695, had raised the question which underlay the theological questions of the eighteenth century, the right of reason to be heard upon religion. To this question Collins directed himself in his first important work, published in 1707. It was entitled *An Essay Concerning the Use of Reason in Propositions, the Evidence whereof depends upon Human Testimony*. A second edition, corrected, appeared in 1709. Collins's work throughout was that of a sapper and miner of the citadel of Christian superstition, and in this work he seeks to secure ample ground as the base of the rationalists' operations. He lays it down that perception must be every man's criterion to distinguish truth from falsehood. The argument Archbishop Tillotson had advanced against transubstantiation—that no miracle can prove a doctrine to be divine which is repugnant to our natural ideas—was adroitly turned against the orthodox, with the conclusion that as revelation was not immediate but dependent upon testimony, we are at liberty to reject it if it contradicts our reason. The essay, in fact, contains in germ Hume's famous *Essay on Miracles*, and also incidentally deals with the anthropomorphism of the Bible, and the evidences of late date found in the Pentateuch.

In this essay, too, Collins deals incidentally with the question of Liberty and Necessity. He says (p. 34): "I know very well that divines put such an idea to the term Liberty as is directly inconsistent with the divine prescience; for they suppose Liberty to stand for a power in man to determine himself, and consequently that there are several actions of man absolutely contingent, since they depend as to their existence on man, who determines their existence from himself without regard to any extrinsical cause." This idea, he proceeds to argue, "is not only inconsistent with the supposition of the Divine Prescience, but inconsistent with Truth."

This was followed by what Professor Huxley calls the wonderful triangular duel between Dodwell, Clarke and Collins on the immortality and immateriality of the soul. The learned but eccentric Dodwell had put forward a treatise contending from the Bible and the Fathers of the Church that the soul was naturally mortal, but that it derived immortality by virtue of the Holy Spirit, received in baptism, and hence that no one since the apostles had power to bestow immortality save the bishops. Dodwell was a perfect pedant. His learning was, as Gibbon testifies, immense, but his method was perplexed and his style barbarous. In this case, from well-established premises, he drew the most absurd conclusions. To rest human hopes of immortality upon episcopacy was indeed a sandy foundation. Such a treatise was well calculated to please the profane and grieve the godly. Several opponents to Dodwell appeared, foremost among them Dr. Samuel Clarke, the friend of Newton, and, since the death of Locke, regarded as England's leading metaphysician. Clarke essayed to "demonstrate" the natural immortality and immateriality of the soul. This gave occasion to Collins to call attention to the difficulties of the question, and to show how far they are from being cleared up by Dr. Clarke's "demonstration." Collins pointed out that Clarke failed to define his terms, and since he allowed that God might bestow the power of thinking upon matter, it followed that matter might think. He hinted, moreover, that scepticism as to the existence of deity began when the Boyle lecturers undertook to prove it. Swift, who, in the twelfth chapter of the *Memoirs of Martin Scriblerus*, pokes fun at some of Collins's arguments, hits the metaphysicians more heavily than he hits Collins. His famous illustrations of the meat-roasting quality which inheres in a jack, though neither in the fly, the weight, nor in any particular wheel, and that of Sir John Cutler's pair of black worsted stockings, "which his maid darned so often with silk that they became at last a pair of silk stockings," tells as strongly against the metaphysical view as against inadequate physical explanations of psychological processes.

Collins replied to the three first defences of Clarke, and then having fully stated his case was satisfied with silence. His letters were collected and published in French in 1769, and are

highly extolled by Naigeon in the *Encyclopædie Methodique* which devotes over a hundred columns to the article "Collins." Prof. Huxley, in his paper on "The Metaphysics of Sensation," published in *Critiques and Addresses* says: "I do not think that anyone can read the letters which passed between Clarke and Collins, without admitting that Collins, who writes with wonderful power and closeness of reasoning, has by far the best of the argument, so far as the possible materiality of the soul goes; and that in this battle the Goliath of Freethinking overcame the champion of what was considered Orthodoxy."

Priestcraft in Perfection followed in 1709. In this little treatise Collins shows that the clause in the twentieth Article of the Church of England, declaring that "the Church hath power to decree rites and ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith" is not contained in the Articles as sanctioned by law, and was fraudulently foisted in afterwards. This pamphlet went through three editions by 1710, and was reprinted in 1865, without any indication of its authorship, but with a preface by the Rev. F. Saunderson, an agitator for the revision of the Book of Common Prayer. The work was anonymous, like all the rest of Collins's productions, but the authorship was pretty well known. He followed this pamphlet up with another, in which he sought to carry the matter further and show that the consent of law had only been given to those Articles which confirmed the confession of the true Christian faith and the doctrine of the sacraments. This engendered a smart controversy, now happily buried in the great rubbish-heap of the past. As late as 1724 Collins returned to the subject in *An Historical and Critical Essay on the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England*.

In 1710 appeared *A Vindication of the Divine Attributes*, in answer to a sermon preached by Archbishop King at Dublin, which bore the title *Divine Predestination and Foreknowledge Consistent with the Freedom of Man's Will*. The Archbishop contended that "the nature of God as it is in itself, is incomprehensible by human understanding." His powers and methods are indeed "of a nature altogether different from ours," so that when we speak of his predetermination, it does not follow that this is inconsistent with the contingency of events or free will. Such theological jugglery Collins was able to expose on Theistic

grounds. Truth, goodness and justice in God are meaningless unless the same as in ourselves. The Archbishop, he declared, gave up the question of Manicheism to Bayle. "Only Mr. Bayle continues to believe God is good and wise against the force of all human reasoning; and his grace supposes God is neither wise nor good: which two do not much, if at all, differ, but in words; for Mr. Bayle's good and wise against evidence and argument is much the same with being neither good nor wise."

The following year Collins visited Holland, where he became acquainted with Le Clerc, and other learned men, and after his return, he published, Feb. 1713, *A Discourse of Freethinking, occasioned by the Rise and Growth of a sect called Freethinkers*. The very title was as the unfurling of a flag presaging battle to theological authority and supernaturalism. Two years before Toland had written of "we Freethinkers." They were a sect and growing. Collins's Discourse was the manifesto of a new cause, a plea for exercising the Protestant principle of private judgment on the Protestant fetish of revelation. To us the duty and necessity of free inquiry seem truisms. At the beginning of last century this plea was a necessary one. Only a century previously Legate and Wightman had been burnt to death for Anti-Trinitarianism, and, as late as 1697 Thomas Aitkenhead was hung for blasphemy at Edinburgh, for calling the books of Moses, Ezra's fables. In the controversy that ensued upon the publication of the *Discourse* Collins was unfortunate. There was a host of replies. The Whigs disclaimed him with loud abhorrence. The Church champions attacked him violently. Even "the Socinian bishop," Hoadly, felt it necessary to controvert the Freethinker. Against such as Hoadly, Hare or Whiston, Collins, had he chosen, might have held his own, but his anonymous treatise had the singularly infelicitous fortune of eliciting two anonymous adversaries, one the prince of critics, the other the king of satirists.

Bully Bentley, in the guise of "Phileleutherus Lipsiensis," fiercely attacked the *Discourse*. In truth, while the arguments of Collins were sound his illustrations were faulty. The Freethinking bantling was healthy, but it was so badly dressed that it was almost smothered with contempt. Collins made

mistakes in his historical allusions. Addison had done no better. In his work on the *Evidences of Christianity*, as Macaulay reminds us, Addison "assigns as grounds of his religious belief, stories as absurd as the Cock Lane ghost, and forgeries as rank as Ireland's *Vortigern*, puts faith in the lie about the Thundering Legion, is convinced that Tiberius moved the Senate to admit Jesus among the gods, and pronounces the letter of Agbarus, King of Edessa, to be a record of great authority." Yet Addison was the pride of Oxford, and his work in defence of orthodoxy was received with applause, while the heresy of Collins was scouted. Bentley succeeded by attacking the illustrations and avoiding the question at issue. He exposed the inferior scholarship of his adversary, and made out that his bad Greek was the outcome of a wicked heart. "Inquire closely into their lives and you will find why they declaim against religion." He even hints that the magistrate should take care of Collins either in a prison or dark rooms, and suggests that the Government should "oblige your East India Company to take on board the whole growing sect, and lodge them at Madagascar, among their confessed and claimed kindred (since they make themselves but a higher species of brutes), the monkeys and the drills." This suggests that Lord Monboddo was not, as generally supposed, the first to maintain that apes were allied to the human species. Bentley left his attack unfinished in two parts, because the court refused to back him in his demand for certain academical fees, and he consequently discovered that "those whom he wrote for were as bad as those he wrote against." The phrase, says Leslie Stephen, supplies a queer confusion between the interests of the Church of Christ and those of the Court of George I.

Richard Cumberland, a grandson of Bentley, says, in the romance entitled *His Life*, that Collins was afterwards helped by Bentley, who, conceiving that by having ruined his character as a writer he had been the occasion of his personal misery, liberally contributed to his maintenance. "In vain," says Isaac D'Israeli in his *Curiosities of Literature*, "I mentioned to that elegant writer, who was not curious about facts, that this person could never have been *Anthony Collins*, who had always a plentiful fortune; and when it was suggested to him that this A. Collins, as he printed it, must have been

Arthur Collins, the historic compiler, who was often in pecuniary difficulties, still he persisted in sending the lie down to posterity, *totidem verbis*, without alteration in his second edition, observing to a friend of mine that 'the story, while it told well, might serve as a striking instance of his great relative's generosity; and that *it should stand*, because it could do no harm to any but to Anthony Collins, whom he considered little short of an Atheist." This "should stand" as an illustration of the conception that duty is only due to those of the faith. Collins, like all pioneers of thought, has had to hold his own against Christian calumny no less than to be on his guard against Christian persecution.

In truth Bentley's scholarship and brow-beating left Collins' argument for Free Inquiry untouched. Swift, in the guise of a Whig, put forth a satire entitled *Mr. Collins' Discourse of Freethinking put into Plain English by Way of Abstract for the Use of the Poor, by a Friend of the Author*. It was a masterly skit. But the irony of events is more powerful than that of the great Dean. The joke now is that much of Swift's splendid satire can be retorted on orthodoxy in earnest. Swift's satire evidently proceeded from his belief, let the reader call it misanthropical or simply just, according to his predilection, that "the bulk of mankind is as well qualified for flying as thinking."

Yet another master mind joined in the attack on Collins. No. 3 of the *Guardian* contained a paper which, says Leslie Stephen, was "attributed either to the admirable Berkeley or the good-natured Steele," but which was certainly by Berkeley, being ascribed to him by his son, Dr. George Berkeley, as well as the annotators, and included in Fraser's edition of Berkeley's *Works*, 1871. The writer says: "As for my part, I cannot see any possible interpretation to give this work but a design to subvert and ridicule the authority of Scripture. The peace and the tranquility of the nation, and regards even above these, are so much concerned in this matter that it is difficult to express sufficient sorrow for the offender, or indignation against him. But if ever man deserved to be denied the common benefit of air and water, it is the author of *A Discourse of Freethinking*." Had the articles in the *Guardian* been signed, the excellent Berkeley might have been spared the

reproach which may be said to attach to him for this incitement to persecution.¹

Collins deemed it prudent to pay a visit to his friends in Holland. He was in consequence ridiculed by those who had been crying out for persecution. But he was not idle. In 1715 he returned to England, and retired to Essex, where he acted as Justice of the Peace, as he had done before in the County of Middlesex and the Liberty of Westminster. In the same year he published the work here reprinted.

Dr. Samuel Clarke, in his *Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God* (1704) had replied to Spinoza's arguments in proof of Necessity. To this Collins had evidently an eye when he said "Liberty is contended for by its patrons as a great perfection." He only mentions "the most acute and ingenious Dr. Clarke," however, towards the close of the work, when he adroitly quotes him to show that by his own admissions as to Moral Necessity he was in fact a Necessitarian. To this Clarke replied that Moral Necessity was no Necessity at all. It is notable that modern metaphysicians like Dr. Hutchinson Stirling take exactly the contrary view.

Clarke having contended against Collins that the doctrine of Necessity was opposed to religion and morality, the Freethinker did not deem fit to run the risk of persecution by provoking further controversy with his opponent. His later *Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity*, a tract of but 23 pages, was not published until after the death of Clarke and in the year of his own decease, 1729.

It is, however, upon the little work here reprinted that the fame of Collins as a philosopher securely rests. The writer of the article on Collins in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (9th ed.) says: "His brief *Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty* (1715) gives, in a remarkably clear and concise form, all the important arguments in favor of his theory, with able and suggestive replies to the chief objections which have been urged against

¹ It is, of course, open to any friend of Berkeley, whose goodness of heart was as undoubted as his genius, to argue that he did not intend any incitement to persecution; air and water being the common benefits of "Providence," whom Collins had presumably insulted, and not such things as men are usually deprived of by their persecutors.

it. Little, in fact, of moment has been added by modern determinists." Similar is the testimony of Dugald Stewart in his Dissertation on Philosophy prefixed to the seventh edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Collins, he says, "following the footsteps of Hobbes, with logical talents not inferior to his master, and with a weight of personal character in his favor, to which his master had no pretensions,² gave to the cause which he so warmly espoused a degree of credit among sober and serious inquirers which it had never before possessed in England. . . . Indeed, I do not know of anything that has been advanced by later writers in support of the scheme of Necessity, of which the germ is not to be found in the inquiry of Collins."

In France the works of Collins had a notable influence on the progress of philosophical ideas. His letters in the Clarke and Dodwell controversy were collected and published (probably by d'Holbach) in 1789 as *Essai sur la nature et la destination de l'âme Humaine*. They were also reprinted in Naigeon's eulogistic article on Collins in the dictionary of ancient and modern philosophy of the *Encyclopédie Méthodique*. This also reprinted the work here published, of which two translations had previously been made—one by De Bons, published by Des Maizeaux in his *Recueil de Diverses Pièces sur la Philosophie, la Religion*, etc. (Amsterdam, 1720), and the other, that used by Naigeon, translated by Lefèvre de Beauvray, published in 1754 as *Paradoxes Métaphysiques sur les Principes des Actions Humaines*. Voltaire, in his Letters on authors accused of attacking the Christian religion, calls Collins "one of the most terrible enemies of the Christian religion."

There has been some controversy raised as to whether Collins's arguments for Necessity do not lead in the direction of Atheism. As if aware of this, he points out that the Epicurians asserted¹ Liberty, while it was denied by the theistic Stoics. He argues, too, that free-will is inconsistent with the omnipotence ascribed

² In a footnote Professor Stewart explains that "I allude to the base servility of Hobbes' political principles, and to the suppleness with which he adapted them to the opposite idea." "To his private virtues the most honorable testimony has been borne, both by his friends and by his enemies."

to Deity. But his opponents, in the loose fashion of that period, considered him an Atheist.

Bentley assumed that Collins was one of "those Atheists, who, looking at their own actions, wish there was no God; and because they wish there were none, persuade themselves there is none." There was little likelihood of Atheism, if it existed, being known, whilst 'Atheist' was considered the synonym of 'scoundrel.'" Collins says that his expression of his opinion was carefully kept "within the bounds of doing himself no harm." He always published anonymously, or with but his initials. But the authorship of his works never remained long a secret. It was probably his position which saved him from attack. How else can we explain it that Blount, Shaftesbury and Collins, who were rich, escaped, while Toland, Woolston and Annet, who were poor, were prosecuted, and the two latter severely punished, for their heresies?

In the advertisement to his *Alciphron*, Bishop Berkeley says he "is well assured that one of the most noted writers against Christianity in our times declared he had found out a demonstration against the being of a God." From Dr. Chandler's *Life of Dr. Samuel Johnson*—not the lexicographer, but an American friend of Berkeley—it appears that this noted writer was Collins. Chandler says (p. 57): "Mr. Johnson, in one of his visits to the Dean [Berkeley], conversing with him on the work on hand [*Alciphron*] was more particularly informed by him that he himself [the Dean] had heard this strange declaration, while he was present in one of the deistical clubs, in the pretended character of a learner, that Collins was the man who made it; and that the 'demonstration' was what he afterwards published, in an attempt to prove that every action is the effect of Fate and Necessity, in his book entitled *A Philosophical Inquiry concerning Human Liberty*. And, indeed, could the point be once established, that everything is produced by Fate and Necessity, it would naturally follow that there is no God, or that he is a very useless and insignificant Being, which amounts to the same thing."

This anecdote must evidently be taken with caution. According to Collins the way to demonstrate the non-existence of God would be to demonstrate the freedom of the will—the very thing he is opposing. No doubt his opposition to Christianity

went deeper in reality than in appearance, but there is even less reason for denying his sincere Deism than in the case of Voltaire.

Dr. John Hunt, in his candid *Religious Thought in England*, (vol. ii., p. 399), says, "Collins's intellect was as cold as it was clear, but it was thoroughly honest. To examine freely and to judge fairly was his religion. . . . As a magistrate he bore a high character. His worst enemies, it is said, could never charge him with any vice or immorality. He is described as amiable, prudent, virtuous, and humane in all domestic duties and relations; of a benevolence towards all men worthy of the character of the citizen of the world." Dr. Hunt would fain give him the title of Christian, and evidently endorses the observation recorded in the *Autobiography of Alexander Carlyle*, that one who knew Collins well once said that if he was not saved in the ship he would certainly get ashore on a plank.

The *Philosophical Inquiry* was republished with a preface by Priestley at Birmingham in 1790. Priestley considered it superior to the renowned work by Jonathan Edwards on the *Freedom of the Will*. It is curious, indeed, how far the New England Calvinist (certainly the ablest American metaphysician), whose work was first published in 1754, followed the work of the English Freethinker. Dugald Stewart says, "The coincidence is so perfect that the outline given by the former of the plan of his work, might have served with equal propriety as a preface to that of the latter." Indeed, if the argument of Collins can be looked on as a demonstration of the non-existence of God, so must that of the great Puritan divine. But Edwards, like Collins, argues that the scheme of free will, by affording an exception to the dictum that everything has a cause, would destroy the proof for the being of God. Professor Fraser, in his smaller work on Berkeley in *Philosophical Classics*, gives his testimony that Collins "states the arguments against human freedom with a logical force unsurpassed by any Necessitarian."

In 1718 Collins was chosen Treasurer for the County of Essex, to the delight, it is said, of tradesmen and others, who had, owing to the defalcations of a former treasurer, large sums of money due to them from the county. Collins supported the poorest of them with his private cash and paid

interest to others, till in 1722 all the debts were discharged by his integrity, care and management. These duties appear to have taken up Collins's attention, for it was not till 1724 that his next work appeared. This was entitled *A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*. It was the most powerful attack upon orthodoxy which had then appeared. With unerring aim he went to the weakest point of Christian Evidences. He maintained, what is indeed indisputable, that Christianity was founded on Judaism, and that the Apostles derive and prove Christianity from the Old Testament. But an examination of the Old Testament prophecies alleged to be fulfilled in the New Testament shows that they do not literally correspond. For example, Matt. i., 22-23: "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet [or rather, as the Revised Version gives it, by the Lord through the prophet], saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel." The words as they stand in Isaiah vii., 14, in their obvious and literal sense, refer to a *young woman* in the reign of Ahaz, king of Judah, and the context shows that the child was Isaiah's own son, the prophet in this matter leaving nothing to the labors of his successors. The only resource is to say that the prophecy was typical, and this Collins explains as such a sense as no one could have discovered in the passages quoted in the New Testament simply as they stand in the Old; so that prophecy was verily a light in a dark place, but not overcoming the darkness, and God must have been in the habit of talking to his prophets in riddles. Collins does not expressly draw the natural inferences from the New Testament misquotations and misinterpretations. He writes as a Christian, and on this, as on many other points, the broad Christians of to-day have come to occupy the ground taken up by the Deists of last century.

Dr. John Hunt says: "Whatever error Collins may have made in detail, his great principle was fairly established, that the evidence for the truth of Christianity from prophecy rests on secondary or typical fulfilments." The real purport of this admission is made plain in Leslie Stephen's acute statement that Collins's true meaning may be brought out by everywhere substituting "nonsense" for "allegory."

The discourse made a great sensation. In the preface to his *Scheme of Literal Prophecy Considered*, 1727, in which he replied to his critics, Collins gives a list of thirty-five answers which had already appeared. Collins gave the principal attention to Bishop Chandler. Lesser fry suggested persecution. Dr. John Rogers, Canon of Wells, wrote: "A confessor or two would be a mighty ornament to his cause. If he expects us to believe that he is in earnest, and believes himself, he should not decline giving us this proof of his sincerity. What will not abide this trial, we shall suspect to have but a poor foundation." No prosecution, however, was instituted.

In 1726 Collins lost his only son, which affected him deeply. He suffered for some time with the stone, and was in very bad health for several years before his death, which occurred at his house in Harley Street, London, Dec. 13, 1729. He was buried at Oxford Chapel, where a monument was erected to his memory. In the year of his death, in addition to the brief dissertation upon Liberty and Necessity, already mentioned, he published an anonymous *Discourse on Ridicule and Irony*, in which he vindicated the employment of these weapons in religious controversy.

Collins bore so high a character that even theological rancor was unable to assert anything against him. On his death he was called in the papers "the active, upright and impartial magistrate; the tender husband, the kind parent, the good master and the true friend." Locke had described him as a gentleman who had "an estate in the country, a library in town, and a friend everywhere."

Collins was a great lover of literature, and his fine library was open to all comers and especially to antagonists. By his will he left part of his goods to the poor. Legacies were also left to Dr. A. Sykes, one of his opponents, and to Des Maizeaux, his friend and literary agent, to whom he left his manuscripts, which included a dissertation on the Sibylline Oracles, showing they were forged by the early Christians, and a discourse on Miracles which he mentions at the end of his *Scheme of Literal Prophecy Considered*. One collection, we know not what it was, was in eight octavo volumes.

This precious legacy the widow of Collins persuaded Des Maizeaux to relinquish, upon which she presented him with

fifty pounds. Des Maizeaux was weak but not dishonest. He returned the money "convinced" as he says in a letter written Jan. 6, 1730, "that I have acted contrary to the will and intention of my dear deceased friend; showed a disregard of the particular mark of esteem he gave me on that occasion; in short, that I have forfeited what is dearer to me than my own life—honor and reputation." Seven years afterwards, on Des Maizeaux spreading a report that the MSS. had been betrayed to the Bishop of London, Mrs. Collins wrote him a sharp letter. He replied in a tone which spoke at once of his affection for Mr. Collins and his own remorse for his weakness. He concludes thus: "Mr. Collins loved me and esteemed me for my integrity and sincerity, of which he had several proofs; how I have been drawn in to injure him, to forfeit the good opinion he had of me, and which were he now alive, would deservedly expose me to this utmost contempt, is a grief which I shall carry to the grave. It would be a sort of comfort to me, if those who have consented I should be drawn in were in some measure sensible of the guilt towards so good, kind and generous a man." The unpublished MSS. disappeared like those of Toland and Blount, and the second volume of Tindal.

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

Too much care cannot be taken to prevent being misunderstood and prejudged in handling questions of such nice speculation as those of Liberty and Necessity; and therefore, though I might in justice expect to be read before any judgment be passed on me, I think it proper to premise the following observations.

1. First, though I deny Liberty, in a certain meaning of that word, yet I contend for Liberty as it signifies a power in man to do as he wills, or pleases; which is the notion of Liberty maintained by Aristotle, Cicero, Mr. Locke, and several other philosophers, ancient and modern; and indeed, after a careful examination of the best authors who have treated of Liberty, I may affirm that however opposite they appear in words to one another, and how much soever some of them seem to maintain another notion of liberty, yet at the bottom, there is an almost universal agreement in the notion defended by me, and all that they say, when examined, will be found to amount to no more.

2. Secondly, when I affirm Necessity, I contend only for what is called Moral Necessity, meaning thereby, that man, who is an intelligent and sensible being, is determined by his reason and his senses; and I deny man to be subject to such necessity as is in clocks, watches, and such other beings, which for want of sensation and intelligence, are subject to an absolute, physical, or mechanical necessity. And here also I have the concurrence of almost all the greatest asserters of Liberty, who either expressly maintain moral necessity, or the thing signified by those words.

3. Thirdly, I have undertaken to show, that the notions I advance, are so far from being inconsistent with, that they are the sole foundations of morality and laws and of rewards and punishments in society

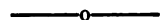
and that the notions I explode are subversive of them. This I judged necessary to make out, in treating a subject that has a relation to Morality, because nothing can be true which subverts those things; and all discourse must be defective wherein the reader perceives any disagreement to moral truth; which is as evident as any speculative truth, and much more necessary to be rendered clear to the reader's mind than truth in all other sciences.

4. Fourthly, I have entitled my discourse, a Philosophical Enquiry, etc. because I propose only to prove my point by experience and by reason, omitting all considerations strictly theological. By this method I have reduced the matter to a short compass; and hope I shall give no less satisfaction than if I had considered it also theological; for all but enthusiasts¹ must think true theology consistent with reason, and with experience.

5. Fifthly, if any should ask of what use such a discourse is, I might offer to their consideration, first, the usefulness of truth in general; and secondly, the usefulness of the truths I maintain towards establishing laws and morality, rewards and punishments in society; but shall content myself with observing, that it may be of use to all those who desire to know the truth in the questions that I handle, and that think examination the proper means to arrive at that knowledge. As for those who either make no inquiries at all, and concern not themselves about any speculations; or who take up with speculations without any examination; or who read only books to confirm themselves in the speculations they have received—I allow my book to be of no use to them, but yet think they may allow others to enjoy a taste different from their own.

¹ An *enthusiast*, according to the vocabulary of Locke and Warburton, and the usage of an age following the excesses of Puritanism, was almost equivalent to a *fanatic*. It was frequently, if not generally, used to designate a person who claimed to be moved by divine illumination, and superior to the dictates of carnal sense.—G. W. F.

A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty.



TO LUCIUS.

“I **HERE** send you in writing my thoughts concerning Liberty and Necessity, which you have so often desired of me : and in drawing them up, have had regard to your penetration, by being as short as is consistent with being understood, and to your love of truth, by saying nothing but what I think true, and also all the truth that I apprehend relates to the subject, with the sincerity belonging to the conversation of friends. If you think me either too short in any respect, or to have omitted the consideration of any objection, by its not occurring to me, or, that you think of importance to be considered ; be pleased to acquaint me therewith, and I will give you all the satisfaction I can.”

INTRODUCTION. :

It is a common observation, even among the learned, that there are certain matters of speculation about which it is impossible, from the nature of the subjects themselves, to speak clearly and distinctly. Upon which account men are very indulgent to, and pardon the unintelligible discourses of theologers and philosophers, which treat of the sublime points in theology and philosophy. And there is no question in the whole compass of speculation of which men have written more obscurely, and of which it is thought more impossible to discourse clearly, and concerning which men more expect and pardon obscure discourse, than

upon the subjects of Liberty and Necessity. But this common observation is both a common and a learned error. For whoever employs his thoughts either about God, or the Trinity in Unity, or any other profound subject, ought to have some ideas,¹ to be the objects of his thoughts, in the same manner as he has in thinking on the most common subjects; for where ideas fail us in any matter, our thoughts must also fail us. And it is plain, whenever we have ideas, we are able to communicate them to others by words²; for words being arbitrary marks of our ideas, we can never want them to signify our ideas, as long as we have so many in use among us, and a power to make as many more as we have occasion for. Since then we can think of nothing farther than we have ideas, and can signify all the ideas we have by words to one another; why should we not be able to put one idea into a proposition as well as another? Why not to compare ideas together about one subject as well as another? And why not to range one sort of propositions into order and method as well as another? When we use the term God, the idea signified thereby ought to be as distinct and determinate in us, as the idea of a triangle or a square, when we discourse of either of them; otherwise, the term God is an empty sound. What hinders us then from putting the idea signified by the term God into a proposition, any more than the idea of a triangle or a square? And why cannot we compare that idea with another idea, as well as two other ideas together; since comparison of ideas consists in observing wherein ideas differ, and wherein they agree; to which nothing is requisite in any ideas, but their being distinct and determinate in our minds? And since we ought to

¹ Collins uses the term *idea* in the sense attached to it by Locke —“the immediate object of perception, thought, or understanding.” —G. W. F.

² I do not mean unknown simple ideas. These can at first only be made known by application of the object to the faculty; but when they have been once perceived and a common name agreed upon to signify them, they can be communicated by words.

have a distinct and determinate idea to the term God, whenever we use it, and as distinct and determinate as that of a triangle or a square; since we can put it into a proposition; since we can compare it with other ideas on account of its distinctness and determinateness; why should we not be able to range our thoughts about God in as clear a method, and with as great perspicuity as about figure and quantity?

I would not hereby be thought to suppose that the idea of God is an adequate idea, and exhausts the subject it refers to, like the idea of a triangle or a square; or that it is as easy to form in our minds as the idea of a triangle or a square; or that it does not require a great comprehension of mind to bring together the various ideas that relate to God, and so compare them together; or that there are not several propositions concerning him that are doubtful, and of which we can arrive at no certainty; or that there are not many propositions concerning him subject to very great difficulties or objections. All these I grant; but I say, they are no reasons to justify obscurity. For, first, an inadequate idea is no less distinct, as such, than an adequate idea, and no less true, as far as it goes; and therefore may be discoursed of with equal clearness and truth. Secondly, though the idea of God be not so easy to form in our minds as the idea of a triangle or a square, and it requires a great comprehension of mind to bring together the various ideas that relate to him, and compare them together; yet these are only reasons for using a greater application, or for not writing at all. Thirdly, if a writer has in relation to his subject any doubts or objections in his mind, which he cannot resolve to his satisfaction, he may express those conceptions or thoughts no less clearly than any other conceptions or thoughts. He should only take care not to exceed the bounds of those conceptions, nor endeavor to make his reader understand what he does not understand himself: for when he exceeds those bounds, his discourse must be dark and his pains useless.

To express what a man conceives is the end of writing; and every reader ought to be satisfied when he sees an author speak of a subject according to the light he has about it, so far as to think him a clear writer.

When therefore any writer speaks obscurely, either about God or any other idea of his mind, the defect is in him. For why did he write before he had a meaning, or before he was able to express to others what he meant? Is it not unpardonable for a man to cant who pretends to teach?

These general reflections may be confirmed by matter of fact from the writings of the most celebrated dogmatical authors.

When such great men as Gassendus, Cartesius,³ Cudworth, Locke, Bayle, Sir Isaac Newton and M. de Fontenelle treat of the most profound questions in metaphysics, mathematics, and other parts of philosophy; they by handling them as far as their clear and distinct ideas reached, have written with no less perspicuity to their proper readers, than other authors have done about historical matters, and upon the plainest and most common subjects.

On the other side, when authors, who in other respects are equal to the foregoing, treat of any subjects further than they have clear and distinct ideas; they do, and cannot but write to as little purpose, and take as absurd pains, as the most ignorant authors do, who treat of any subject under a total ignorance, or a confused knowledge of it. There are so many examples of these latter occurring to every reader; and there are such frequent complaints of men's venturing beyond their ability in several questions, that I need not name particular authors, and may fairly avoid the odium of censuring any one. But having met with a passage concerning the ingenious Father Malebranche in the Letters of Mr. Bayle, who

³ Gassendus is the Latin form of Gassendi, name of an eminent astronomer and philosopher, born in 1592. Cartesius is of course the great Descartes.—G. W. F.

was an able judge, a friend to him, and a defender of him in other respects, I hope I may, without being liable to exception, produce Father Malebranche as an example. He has in several books treated of, and vindicated, the opinion of seeing all things in God ; and yet so acute a person as Mr. Bayle, after having read them all, declares that he less comprehends his notion from his last book than ever.⁴ Which plainly shows a defect in F. Malebranche to write upon a subject he understood not, and therefore could not make others understand.

You see, I bespeak no favor in the question before me, and take the whole fault to myself, if I do not write clearly to you on it, and prove what I propose.

And that I may inform you, in what I think clear to myself, I will begin with explaining the sense of the question.

The question stated.

Man is a necessary agent, if all his actions are so determined by the causes preceding each action, that not one past action could possibly not have come to pass, or have been otherwise than it hath been ; nor one future action can possibly not come to pass, or be otherwise than it shall be. He is a free agent, if he is able, at any time under the circumstances and causes he then is, to do different things ; or, in other words, if he is not unavoidably determined in every point of time by the circumstances he is in, and the causes he is under, to do that one thing he does, and not possibly to do any other.

First argument, wherein our experience is considered.

I. This being a question of fact concerning what we ourselves do, we will first consider our own experi-

⁴ J'ai parcouru le nouveau livre du Pere Malebranche contre Mr. Arnauld : & j'y ai moins compris que jamais sa pretention, que les Idées, par lesquelles nous connoissons les Objets, sont en Dieu, & non dans notre Ame. Il y a là du mal-entendu : ce sont, ce me semble, des equivoques perpetuelles. *Letter of the 16th of October, 1705, to Mr. Des Maizeaux.*

ence, which, if we can know, as sure we may, will certainly determine this matter. And because experience is urged with great triumph, by the patrons of Liberty, we will begin with a few general reflections concerning the argument of experience; and then we will proceed to our experience itself.

General Reflections on the argument of experience.

1. The vulgar, who are bred up to believe Liberty or Freedom, think themselves secure of success, constantly appealing to experience for a proof of their freedom, and being persuaded that they feel themselves free on a thousand occasions. And the source of their mistake, seems to be as follows. They either attend not to, or see not the causes of their actions,⁵ especially in matters of little moment, and thence conclude they are free, or not moved by causes, to do what they do.

They also frequently do actions whereof they repent; and because in the repenting humor they find no present motive to do those actions, they conclude that they might not have done them at the time they did them, and that they were free from necessity (as they were from outward impediments) in the doing them.

They also find that they can do as they will, and forbear as they will, without any external impediment to hinder them from doing as they will; let them will either doing or forbearing. They likewise see that they often change their minds; that they can, and do choose differently every successive moment; and that they frequently deliberate, and thereby are sometimes at a near balance, and in a state of indifference with respect to judging about some propositions, and willing or choosing with respect to some objects. And experiencing these things they mistake them for the exercise of Freedom, or Liberty from Necessity. For

⁵ Spinoza had previously pointed out, in his terse, magisterial style, that men know that they will, but do not know the causes that determined them to will.—G. W. F.

ask them whether they think themselves free, and they will immediately answer, Yes; and say some one or other of these foregoing things, and particularly think they prove themselves free when they affirm they can do as they will.

Nay, celebrated philosophers and theologers, both ancient and modern, who have meditated much on this matter, talk after the same manner, giving definitions of Liberty that are consistent with Fate or Necessity; though, at the same time, they would be thought to exempt some of the actions of man from the power of Fate, or to assert Liberty from Necessity. Cicero defines Liberty to be a power to do as we will.⁶ And therein several moderns follow him. One defines Liberty to be a power to act, or not to act, as we will.⁷ Another defines it in more words thus: "A power to do what we will, and because we will; so that if we did not will it, we should not do it; we should even do the contrary if we willed it."⁸ And another: "A power to do or forbear an action, according to the determination or thought of the mind, whereby either is preferred to the other."⁹ On all which definitions, if the reader will be pleased to reflect, he will see them to be only definitions of Liberty or Freedom from outward impediments of action, and not a Freedom or Liberty from Necessity; as I also will show them to be in the sequel of this discourse, wherein I shall contend equally with them for such a power as they describe, though I affirm that there is no Liberty from Necessity.

Alexander the Aphrodisæan¹ (a most acute philosopher of the second century, and the earliest commentator now extant upon Aristotle, and esteemed his best defender and interpreter) defines Liberty to be "A power to choose what to do after deliberation and

⁶ Opera, p. 3968. Ed. Gron.

⁷ Placette Eclairciss. sur la Liberté, p. 2.

⁸ Jaquetot, sur l'exist. de Dieu, p. 381.

⁹ Locke's Essay of Human Understanding, Book II., c. xxi., § 8.

¹ Fabricii Bibl. Gr., vol. iv., 63. Vossius de Sect. Phil. c. 18.

consultation, and to choose and do what is most eligible to our reason; whereas otherwise we should follow our fancy."² Now a choice after deliberation, is a no less necessary choice than a choice by fancy. For though a choice by fancy, or without deliberation, may be, one way, and a choice with deliberation may be another way, or different; yet each choice being founded on what is judged best, the one for one reason and the other for another, is equally necessary; and good or bad reasons, hasty or deliberate thoughts, fancy or deliberation, make no difference.

In the same manner Bishop Bramhall,³ who has written several books for Liberty, and pretends to assert the Liberty taught by Aristotle, defines Liberty thus: He says, "That act which makes a man's actions to be truly free, is *election*; which is the deliberate choosing or refusing of this or that means, or the acception of one means before another, where divers are represented by the understanding."⁴ And that this definition places Liberty wholly in choosing the seeming best means, and not in choosing the seeming worst means, equally with the best, will appear from the following passages. He says, "Actions done in sudden and violent passions, are not free; because there is no deliberation nor election. To say the will is determined by motives, that is, by reasons or discourses, is as much as to say that the agent is determined by himself or is free. Because motives determine *not* naturally but morally; which kind of determination is consistent with true Liberty. Admitting that the will

² De fato, p. m. 57.

³ Bishop Bramhall was a learned divine, who forgot that St. Augustine and Martin Luther were Necessitarians, and who opposed Hobbes with great insolence and asperity. Considering the greatness of his adversary, and the perfect inability of the Bishop to understand the questions in dispute, it is amusing to read the wish of his clerical editor, in the Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology, that "his opponent had been more worthy of him."—G. W. F.

⁴ Bp. Bramhall's Works, p. 755.

follows necessarily the last dictate of the understanding, this is not destructive of the Liberty of the will; this is only an hypothetical necessity." So that Liberty with him consists in choosing or refusing necessarily after deliberation; which choosing or refusing is morally and hypothetically determined, or necessary by virtue of the said deliberation.

Lastly, a great Armenian theologer, who has writ a course of Philosophy and entered into several controversies on the subject of Liberty, makes Liberty to consist in "an indifferency of mind while a thing is under deliberation."⁵ "For," says he, "while the mind deliberates it is free till the moment of action; because nothing determines it necessarily to act or not to act." Whereas when the mind balances or compares ideas or motives together, it is then no less necessarily determined to a state of indifferency by the appearances of those ideas and motives, than it is necessarily determined in the very moment of action. Were a man to be at liberty in this state of indifferency he ought to have it in his power to be not indifferent, at the same time that he is indifferent.

If experience therefore proves the Liberty contended for by the foregoing asserters of Liberty, it proves men to have no Liberty from Necessity.

2. As the foregoing asserters of Liberty give us definitions of Liberty, as grounded on experience, which are consistent with Necessity, so some of the greatest patrons of Liberty do by their concessions in this matter sufficiently destroy all argument from experience.

Erasmus, in his treatise for Free-will against Luther, says, That among the difficulties which have exercised the theologers and philosophers of all ages, there is none greater than the question of free-will.⁶ And M. Le Clerc, speaking of this book of Erasmus, says that

⁵ Le Clerc Bibl. Chois., tom. xii., p. 103, 104.

⁶ Opera, tom. ix., p. 1215.

the question of free-will was too subtle for Erasmus, who was no philosopher; which makes him often contradict himself.⁷

The late Bishop of Sarum,⁸ though he contends, Every man experiences Liberty; yet owns that great difficulties attend the subject on all hands, and that therefore he pretends not to explain or answer them.

The famous Bernard Ochino, a great Italian wit, has written a most subtle and ingenious book, entitled, *Labyrinths concerning Free-will and Predestination*, etc., wherein he shows that they who assert that man acts freely are involved in four great difficulties; and that those who assert that man acts necessarily, fall into four other difficulties. So that he forms eight labyrinths, four against Liberty and four against Necessity. He turns himself all manner of ways to get clear of them; but not being able to find any solution, he constantly concludes with a prayer to God to deliver him from these abysses. Indeed, in the progress of his work, he endeavors to furnish means to get out of this prison; but he concludes that the only way is to say, with Socrates, *Hoc unum scio quod nihil scio*. We ought, says he, to rest contented, and conclude that God requires neither the affirmative nor negative of us. This is the title of his last chapter, *Quâ viâ ex omnibus supradictis Labyrinthis citò exiri possit, quæ doctæ ignorantiae viâ vocatur*.

A famous author,⁹ who appeals to common experience for a proof of Liberty, confesses that the question of Liberty is the most obscure and difficult question in all philosophy; that the learned are fuller of contradictions to themselves, and to one another, on this than on any other subject: and that he writes against the common notion of Liberty, and endeavors to establish another notion, which he allows to be intricate.

⁷ Bibl. Choif., tom. xii., p. 51.

⁸ Expos., p. 117.

⁹ King de Orig. Mali., p. 91, 127.

But how can all this happen in a plain matter of fact, supposed to be experienced by everybody? What difficulty can there be in stating a plain matter of fact, and describing what everybody feels? What need of so much philosophy? and why so many contradictions on the subject? And how can all men experience Liberty, when it is allowed that the common notion of Liberty is false, or not experienced; and a new notion of Liberty, not thought on before (or thought on but by few) is set up as matter of experience? This could not happen if matter of fact was clear for Liberty.

3. Other asserters of Liberty seem driven into it on account of supposed inconveniencies attending the doctrine of Necessity. The great Episcopius, in his *Treatise of Free-will*, acknowledges in effect that the asserters of Necessity have seeming experience on their side, and are thereby very numerous. They,¹ as he observes, allege one thing of moment in which they triumph, viz., "that the will is determined by the understanding: and assert that unless it were so the will would be a blind faculty, and might make evil, as evil, its object, and reject what is pleasant and agreeable, and by consequence that all persuasions, promises, reasonings and threats would be as useless to a man as to a stock or a stone." This he allows to be very plausible, and to have the appearance of probability; to be the common sentiment of the schools; to be the rock on which the ablest defenders of Liberty have split, without being able to answer it; and to be the reason or argument (or rather the matter of experience) which has made men in all ages, and not a few in this age, fall into the opinion of the fatal Necessity of all things. But because it makes all our actions necessary, and thereby, in his opinion, subverts all religion, laws, rewards and punishments, he concludes it to be most certainly false, and religion makes him quit this common and plausible opinion. Thus also many other strenuous

¹ Opera, vol. i., p. 198, 199, 200.

asserters of Liberty as well as himself are driven by these supposed difficulties to deny manifest experience. I say manifest experience, for are we not manifestly determined by pleasure or pain, and by what seems reasonable or unreasonable to us, to judge, or will, or act? Whereas could they see that there are not grounds for laws and morality, rewards and punishments, but by supposing the doctrine of Necessity; and that there is no foundation for laws and morality, rewards and punishments, upon the supposition of a man's being a free agent (as shall evidently and demonstratively appear) they would readily allow experience to be against Free-will and deny Liberty when they should see there was no need to assert it, in order to maintain those necessary things. And as a farther evidence thereof, let any man peruse the discourses written by the ablest authors for Liberty, and he will see (as they confess of one another) that they frequently contradict themselves, write obscurely, and know not where to place Liberty; at least he will see that he is able to make nothing of their discourses, no more than Mr. Locke² was of this treatise of Episcopius, who in all his other writings shows himself to be a clear, strong and argumentative writer.

4. There are others, and those contenders for Liberty, as well as deniers of it, who report the persuasions of men, as to the matter of fact, very differently, and also judge very differently themselves about the fact, from what is vulgarly believed among those who maintain Free-will.

An ancient author speaks thus³: Fate, says he, is sufficiently proved from the general received opinion and persuasion of men thereof. For in certain things, when men all agree, except a few who dissent from them on account of maintaining some doctrines before taken up, they cannot be mistaken. Wherefore Anaxagoras the Clazomenian, though no contemptible

² Letters, p. 521.

³ Alexander de Fato, p. 10.

naturalist, ought not be judged to deserve any regard, when opposing the common persuasion of all men, he asserts, "That nothing is done by fate; but that it is an empty name." And according to all authors, recording the opinions of men in this matter, the belief of Fate, to all events, has continued to be the most common persuasion both of philosophers and people; as it is at this day the persuasion of much the greatest part of mankind, according to the relations of voyagers. And though it has not equally prevailed among Christians, as it has, and does, among all other religious parties; yet it is certain, the Fatalists have been and are very numerous among Christians; and the free-will theologers themselves allow,⁴ That some Christians are as great Fatalists, as any of the ancient philosophers were.

The acute and penetrating Mr. Bayle, reports the fact, as very differently understood by those who have thoroughly examined and considered the various actions of man, from what is vulgarly supposed in this matter. Says he,⁵ "They who examine not to the bottom what passes within them, easily persuade themselves that they are free; but they who have considered with care the foundation and circumstances of their actions, doubt of their Freedom, and are even persuaded that their reason and understandings are slaves that cannot resist the force which carries them along." He says also, in a familiar letter, that "the best proofs alleged for Liberty are, that without it man could not sin; and that God would be the author of evil as well as good thoughts."⁶

And the celebrated Mr. Leibniz, that universal genius, on occasion of Archbishop King's appeal to experience (in behalf of his notion of liberty, viz.⁷ A faculty, which, being indifferent to objects and

⁴ Reeves's *Apol.*, vol. i., p. 150, *Sherlock of Prov.*, p. 66.

⁵ *Dictionnaire*, p. 1497; 20 edit.

⁶ Letter of the 13th December, 1696, to the Abbott du Bos.

⁷ *De Orig. Mali.*, c. 5.

over-ruling our passions, appetites, sensations, and reason, chooses arbitrarily among objects; and renders the object chosen agreeable, only because it has chosen it) denies that we experience such, or any other Liberty; but contends that we rather experience a determination in all our actions. Says he,⁸ "We experience something in us which inclines us to a choice; and if it happens that we cannot give a reason of all our inclinations, a little attention will show us, that the constitution of our bodies, the bodies encompassing us, the present, or preceding state of our minds, and several little matters comprehended under these great causes, may contribute to make us choose certain objects, without having recourse to a pure indifference, or to I know not what power of the soul, which does upon objects what they say colors do upon theameleon." In fine he is so far from thinking that there is the least foundation, from experience, for the said notion of Liberty, that he treats it as a chimera, and compares it to the magical power of the fairies to transform things.

Lastly, the Journalists of Paris are very far from thinking Archbishop King's notion of Liberty to be matter of experience, when they say that Dr. King not satisfied with any of the former notions of liberty, proposes a new notion; and carries indifference so far as to maintain that pleasure is not the motive, but the effect of the choice of the will; *placet res quia eligitur, non eligitur quia placet*. This opinion, add they, makes him frequently contradict himself.⁹

So that upon the whole, the affair of experience, with relation to Liberty, stands thus. Some give the name Liberty to actions, which, when described, are plainly actions that are necessary. Others, though appealing to vulgar experience, yet inconsistently therewith, contradict the vulgar experience, by owning it to be an intricate matter, and treating it after an intricate

⁸ Remarques sur le liv. de l'Orig. du mal, p. 76.

⁹ Journal des Savans of the 16th of March, 1705.

manner. Others are driven into the defence of Liberty by difficulties imagined to flow from the doctrine of Necessity, combating what they allow to be matter of seeming experience. Others, and those the most discerning, either think Liberty cannot be proved by experience, or think men may see by experience, that they are necessary agents, and the bulk of mankind have always been persuaded that they are necessary agents.

Our experience itself considered.

Having thus paved the way by showing that Liberty is not a plain matter of experience, by arguments drawn from the asserters of Liberty themselves, and by consequence subverted the argument from experience for Liberty; we will now run over the various actions of men which can be conceived to concern this subject, and examine, whether we can know from experience, that man is a free or a necessary agent. I think those actions may be reduced to these four: 1. Perception of Ideas. 2. Judging of Propositions. 3. Willing. 4. Doing as we will.

1. *Perception of Idea.* Of this there can be no dispute but it is a necessary action of man, since it is not even a voluntary action. The ideas both of sensation and reflection, offer themselves to us whether we will or no, and we cannot reject them. We must be conscious that we think, when we do think; and thereby we necessarily have the ideas of reflection. We must also use our senses when awake; and thereby necessarily receive the ideas of sensation. And as we necessarily receive ideas, so each idea is necessarily what it is in our mind; for it is not possible to make any thing different from itself. This first necessary action, the reader will see, is the foundation and cause of all the other intelligent actions of man, and makes them also necessary. For, as a judicious author, and nice observer of the inward actions of man, says truly: "Temples have their sacred images, and we see what

influence they have always had over a great part of mankind. But in truth, the ideas and images in men's minds, are the Invisible Powers that constantly govern them, and to these they universally pay a ready submission."¹

2. The second action of man is judging of propositions. All propositions must appear to me either self-evident, or evident from proof, or probable, or improbable, or doubtful, or false. Now these various appearances of propositions to me, being founded on my capacity, and the degree of light propositions stand in to me, I can no more change those appearances in me than I can change the idea of red raised in me. Nor can I judge contrary to those appearances, for what is judging of propositions but judging that propositions do appear as they do appear? which I cannot avoid doing, without lying to myself, which is impossible. If any man thinks he can judge a proposition, appearing to him evident, to be not evident; or a probable proposition to be more or less probable than it appears by the proofs to be; he knows not what he says, as he may see if he will define his words. The necessity of being determined by appearances was maintained by all the old philosophers, even by the academics or sceptics. Cicero says,² "You must take from a man his senses, if you take from him the power of assenting; for it is as necessary the mind should yield to what is clear, as that a scale hanging on a balance should sink with a weight laid on it. For as all living creatures cannot but desire what is agreeable to their natures, so they cannot but assent to what is clear. Wherefore, if those things whereof we dispute are true, it is to no purpose to speak of assent. For he who apprehends, or perceives anything, assents immediately." Again, "assent not only precedes the practice of vice, but of virtue, the steady performance

¹ Locke's Posth. Works, p. 1, 2.

² Academ. Quest., lib. 2.

whereof and adherence to which depend on what a man has assented to and approved. And it is necessary that something should appear to us before we act, and that we should assent to that appearance. Wherefore he who takes away appearances and assent from man, destroys all action in him." The force of this reasoning manifestly extends to all the various judgments men make upon the appearance of things. And Cicero, as an academic or sceptic, must be supposed to extend Necessity to every kind of judgment, or assent, of man upon the appearances (or as the Greeks call them *Φαινόμενα* and himself the *Visa*) of things. Sextus Empiricus says,³ "they who say the sceptics take away appearances, have not conversed with them, and do not understand them. For we destroy not the passions, to which our senses find themselves exposed whether we will or no, and which force us to submit to appearances. For when it is asked us whether objects are such as they appear, we deny not their appearances nor doubt of them, but only question whether the external objects are like the appearances."

3. Willing is the third action of man which I propose to consider. It is matter of daily experience that we begin or forbear, continue or end, several actions barely by a thought, or preference of the mind, ordering the doing or not doing, the continuing or ending, such or such actions. Thus, before we think or deliberate on any subject, as before we get on horseback, we do prefer those things to anything else in competition with them. In like manner, if we forbear these actions when any of them are offered to our thoughts, or if we continue to proceed in any one of these actions once begun, or if at any time we make an end of prosecuting them, we do forbear, or continue, or end them on our preference of the forbearance to the doing of them, of the continuing of them to the ending them, and of the ending to the continuing them. This

³ Pyrrhon. Hypot. l. 2, c. 10.

power of the man thus to order the beginning or forbearance, the continuance or ending of any action, is called the will, and the actual exercise thereof willing.

There are two questions usually put about this matter—first, Whether we are at liberty to will or not to will? secondly, Whether we are at liberty to will one or the other of two or more objects?

1. As to the first, whether we are at liberty to will or not to will, it is manifest we have not that liberty. For let an action in a man's power be proposed to him as presently to be done, as for example, to walk—the will to walk or not to walk exists immediately. And when an action in a man's power is proposed to him to be done to-morrow, as to walk to-morrow, he is no less obliged to have some immediate will. He must either have a will to defer willing about the matter proposed, or he must will immediately in relation to the thing proposed, and one or the other of those wills must exist immediately, no less than the will to walk or not to walk in the former case. Wherefore, in every proposal of something to be done which is in a man's power to do, he cannot but have some immediate will.

Hence appears the mistake of those who⁴ think men at liberty to will, or not to will, because, say they, they can suspend willing, in relation to actions to be done to-morrow; wherein they plainly confound themselves with words. For when it is said man is necessarily determined to will, it is not thereby understood that he is determined to will or choose one out of two objects immediately in every case proposed to him (or to choose at all in some cases—as whether he will travel into France or Holland), but that on every proposal he must necessarily have *some will*. And he is not less determined to will, because he does often suspend willing or choosing in certain cases; for suspending to will is itself an act of willing; it is willing to defer willing about the matter proposed. In fine, though

⁴ Locke of the Hum. Und., l. 2, c. 21.

great stress is laid on the case of suspending the will to prove Liberty, yet there is no difference between that and the most common cases of willing and choosing upon the manifest excellency of one object before another. For, as when a man wills or chooses living in England before going out of it (in which will he is manifestly determined by the satisfaction he has in living in England) he rejects the will to go out of England; so a man who suspends a will about any matter, wills doing nothing in it at present, or rejects for a time willing about it; which circumstances of wholly rejecting, and rejecting for a time, make no variation that affects the question. So that willing, or choosing suspension, is like all other choices or wills that we have.

2. Secondly, let us now see whether we are at liberty to will or choose one or the other of two or more objects. Now as to this we will first consider whether we are at liberty to will one of two or more objects wherein we discern any difference; that is, where one upon the whole seems less hurtful than another. And this will not admit of much dispute, if we consider what willing is. Willing or preferring is the same with respect to good and evil, that judging is with respect to truth or falsehood. It is judging that one thing is, upon the whole, better than another, or not so bad as another. Wherefore, as we judge of truth or falsehood according to appearances, so we must will or prefer as things seem to us, unless we can lie to ourselves, and think that to be worst which we think best.

An ingenious author expresses this matter well when he says, "the question whether a man be at liberty to will which of the two he pleases, motion or rest, carries the absurdity of it so manifestly in itself that one might hereby be sufficiently convinced that Liberty concerns not the will. For to ask whether a man be at liberty to will either motion or rest, speaking or silence, which he pleases, is to ask whether a man can

will what he wills, or be pleased with what he is pleased with. A question that needs no answer.”⁵

To suppose a sensible being capable of willing or preferring (call it as you please) misery and refusing good, is to deny it to be really sensible; for every man while he has his senses, aims at pleasure and happiness, and avoids pain and misery; and this, in willing actions, which are supposed to be attended with the most terrible consequences. And therefore the ingenious Mr. Norris⁶ very justly observes, that all who commit sin, think it at the instant of commission, all things considered, a lesser evil; otherwise it is impossible they should commit it; and he instances in St. Peter’s denial of his master, who he says, “judged that part most eligible which he choose, that is, judged the sin of denying his master, at that present juncture, to be a less evil than the danger of not denying him; and so chose it. Otherwise, if he had then actually thought it a greater evil, all that whereby it exceeded the other, he would have chosen gratis, and consequently have willed evil as evil, which is impossible.” And another acute philosopher observes⁷, that there are in France many new converts, who go to mass with great reluctance. They know they mortally offend God, but as each offence would cost them (suppose) two pistoles, and having reckoned the charge, and finding that this fine, paid as often as there are festivals and Sundays would reduce them and their families to beg their bread, they conclude it is better to offend God than beg.

In fine, though there is hardly anything so absurd, but some ancient philosopher or other may be cited for it; yet, according to Plato,⁸ none of them were so absurd as to say that men did evil voluntarily; and he asserts that it is contrary to the nature of man to follow evil as evil, and not pursue good; and that when a man

⁵ Locke’s *Essay of Human Understanding*, l. 2, c. 21, sect. 25.

⁶ *Theory of Love*, p. 199.

⁷ *Bayle Response aux Ques. etc.*, vol. iii., p. 756.

⁸ *Opera*, Edit. Serran, vol. i., p. 345, 358.

is compelled to choose between two evils, you will never find a man who chooses the greatest, if it is in his power to choose the less; and that this is a truth manifest to all. ⁹And even the greatest modern advocates for Liberty allow that whatever the will chooseth, it chooseth under the notion of good; and that the object of the will is good in general, which is the end of all human actions.

This I take to be sufficient to show that man is not at liberty to will one or the other of two or more objects between which (all things considered) he perceives a difference; and to account truly for all the choices of that kind which can be assigned.

But, secondly, some of the patrons of Liberty contend that we are free in our choice among things indifferent, or alike, as in choosing one out of two or more eggs; and that in such cases the man, having no motives from the objects, is not necessitated to choose one rather than the other, because there is no perceivable difference between them, but chooses one by a mere act of willing without any cause but his own free act.¹

To which I answer, (1) first, by asking whether this and other instances like this are the only instances wherein man is free to will or choose among objects? If they are the only instances where man is free to will or choose among objects, then we are advanced a great way in the question; because there are few (if any) objects of the will that are perfectly alike; and because Necessity is hereby allowed to take place in

⁹ Bramhall's Works, p. 656, 658.

¹ Necessitarians may think that Collins has overlabored his answer to this sophism of the two eggs, but there is nothing like thoroughly disposing of your adversary's illustration, and showing that it proves your own argument. It should also be remembered that the sophism still does duty on orthodox platforms, to the delight of ignorant believers. How long it has figured in the world we are unable to say, but it can at least be traced back to Buridan, a writer of the fourteenth century, who put the case of a hungry ass between two bundles of hay so exactly similar that he could not choose between them, and would therefore die of starvation in the sight of plenty.—G. W. F.

all cases where there is a perceivable difference in things, and consequently in all moral and religious cases, for the sake whereof such endeavors have been used to maintain so absurd and inconsistent a thing as Liberty or Freedom from Necessity. So that Liberty is almost, if not quite, reduced to nothing and destroyed, as to the grand end in asserting it. If those are not the only instances wherein man is free to will or choose among objects, but man is free to will in other cases, these other cases should be assigned, and not such cases as are of no consequence, and which by the great likeness of the objects to one another, and for other reasons, make the cause of the determination of man's will less easy to be known, and consequently serve to no other purpose but to darken the question, which may be better determined by considering, whether man be free to will or not in more important instances.

2. Secondly, I answer, that whenever a choice is made, there can be no equality of circumstances preceding the choice. For in the case of choosing one out of two or more eggs, between which there is no perceivable difference; there is not, nor can there be, a true equality of circumstances and causes preceding the act of choosing one of the said eggs. It is not enough to render things equal to the will, that they are equal or alike in themselves. All the various modifications of the man, his opinions, prejudices, temper, habit, and circumstances, are to be taken in, and considered as causes of election, no less than the objects without us among which we choose; and these will ever incline or determine our wills, and make the choice we do make preferable to us, though the external objects of our choice are ever so much alike to each other. And, for example, in the case of choosing one out of the two eggs that are alike, there is first, in the person choosing, will to eat or use an egg. There is, secondly, a will to take but one, or one first. Thirdly, consequent to these two wills, follow in the

same instant choosing and taking one ; which one is chosen and taken, most commonly, according as the parts of our bodies have been formed long since by our wills, or by other causes, to an habitual practice, or as those parts are determined by some particular circumstances at that time. And we may know, by reflection on our actions, that several of our choices have been determined to one among several objects by these last means, when no cause has arisen from the mere consideration of the objects themselves. For we know by experience that we either use all the parts of our bodies by habit, or according to some particular cause determining their use at that time.

Fourthly, there are in all trains of causes that precede their effects, and especially effects which nearly resemble each other, certain differences undiscernible on account of their minuteness and also on account of our not accustoming ourselves to attend to them, which yet, in concurrence with other causes, as necessarily produce their effect, as the last feather laid on breaks the horse's back, and as a grain necessarily turns the balance between any weights, though the eye cannot discover which is the greatest weight or bulk by so small a difference. And I add, that as we know without such discovery by the eye, that if one scale rises and the other falls, there is a greater weight in one scale than the other, and also know that the least additional weight is sufficient to determine the scales, so likewise we may know that the least circumstance in the extensive chain of causes that precede every effect, is sufficient to produce an effect, and also know that there must be causes of our choice (though we do not, or cannot discern those causes) by knowing that every thing that has a beginning must have a cause. By which last principle we are as necessarily led to conceive a cause of action in man, where we see not the particular cause itself, as we are to conceive that a greater weight determines a scale, though our eyes discover no difference between the two weights.

But let us put a case of true equality or indifference, and what I have asserted will more manifestly appear true. Let two eggs appear perfectly alike to a man; and let him have no will to eat or use eggs (for so the case ought to be put, to render things perfectly indifferent to him), because, if once a will to eat eggs be supposed, that will must necessarily introduce a train of causes which will ever destroy an equality of circumstances in relation to the things which are the objects of our choice. There will soon follow a second will to eat one first. And these *two wills* must put the man upon action, and the usages of the parts of his body to obtain his end; which parts are determined in their motions either by some habitual practice, or by some particular circumstance at that time, and cause the man to choose and take one of them first rather than the other. The case of equality being thus rightly stated, I say it is manifest no choice would or could be made; and the man is visibly prevented in the beginning from making a choice. For every man experiences that before he can make a choice among eggs, he must have a will to eat or use an egg; otherwise he must let them alone. And he also experiences, in relation to all things which are the objects of his choice, that he must have a precedent will to choose, otherwise he will make no choice. No man marries one woman preferably to another, or travels into France rather than into another country, or writes a book on one subject rather than another, but he must first have a precedent will to marry, travel and write.

It is therefore contrary to experience to suppose any choice can be made under an equality of circumstances. And by consequence it is matter of experience that man is ever determined in his willing or acts of volition and choice.

Doing as we will.

4. Fourthly, I shall now consider the actions of man consequent to *willing*, and see whether he be *free* in

any of those actions. And here also we experience perfect Necessity. If we will thinking or deliberating on a subject, or will reading, or walking, or riding, we find we must do those actions, unless some external impediment, as an apoplexy, or some intervening cause, hinders us; and then we are as much necessitated to let an action alone, as we are to act according to our will, had no such external impediment to action happened. If also we change our wills after we have begun any of these actions, we find we necessarily leave off these actions and follow the new will or choice. And this was Aristotle's sense of such actions of man. "As," says he, "in arguing we necessarily assent to the inference or conclusion drawn from premises, so if that arguing relate to practice, we necessarily act upon such inference or conclusion. As, for example, when we argue thus, whatever is sweet, is to be tasted, this is sweet; he who infers, therefore, this ought to be tasted, necessarily tastes that sweet thing if there be no obstacle to hinder him."²

For a conclusion of this argument from experience, let us compare the actions of inferior, intelligent, and sensible agents, and those of men together. It is allowed that beasts are necessary agents, and yet there is no perceivable difference between their actions and the actions of men, from whence they should be deemed necessary and men free agents. Sheep, for example, are supposed to be necessary agents, when they stand still, lie down, go slow or fast, turn to the right or left, skip, as they are differently affected in their minds; when they are doubtful or deliberate which way to take; when they eat or drink more or less according to their humor, or as they like the water or the pasture; when they choose the sweetest and best pasture; when they choose among pastures that are indifferent or alike; when they copulate; when they are fickle or steadfast in their amours; when they

² *Ethica*, l. 7, c. 5, ap. Opera Edit. Par, vol. ii., p. 88, etc.

take more or less care of their young; when they act in virtue of vain fears; when they apprehend danger and fly from it, and sometimes defend themselves; when they quarrel among themselves about love or other matters, and terminate those quarrels by fighting; when they follow those leaders among themselves that presume to go first; and when they are either obedient to the shepherd and his dog or refractory. And why should man be deemed free in the performance of the same or like actions? He has indeed more knowledge than sheep. He takes in more things as matter of pleasure than they do, being sometimes moved with notions of honor and virtue, as well as with those pleasures he has in common with them. He is also more moved by absent things and things future than they are.³ He is also subject to more vain fears, more mistakes and wrong actions, and infinitely more absurdities in notions. He has also more power and strength, as well as more art and cunning, and is capable of doing more good and more mischief to his fellow-men than they are to one another. But these larger powers and larger weaknesses which are of the same kind with the powers and weaknesses of sheep, cannot contain Liberty in them, and plainly make no perceivable difference between them and men as to the general causes of action, in finite intelligent and sensible beings, no more than the different degrees of these powers and weaknesses among the various kinds of beasts, birds, fishes, and reptiles do among them. Wherefore I need not run through the actions of foxes,

³ This little sentence is pregnant with great meanings, and it shows how Collins had pondered the problem he was discussing. Imagination brings absent things present, and thus enlarges the field of moral motive. Without its aid we are at the mercy of the momentary solicitation of what is present to our senses; and this accounts for the strangely callous conduct of many amiable persons. The relation of imagination to morality is beautifully dealt with by Shelley in his *Defence of Poetry*, where he justly remarks that "A man to be greatly good must imagine intensely and comprehensively."—G. W. F.

or any of the more subtle animals, nor the actions of children, which are allowed by the advocates⁴ of Liberty to be all necessary. I shall only ask these questions concerning the last. To what age do children continue necessary agents, and when do they become free? What different experience have they when they are supposed to be free agents from what they had while necessary agents? And what different actions do they do from whence it appears that they are necessary agents to a certain age, and free agents afterwards?

Second argument taken from the impossibility of Liberty.

II. A second reason to prove man a necessary agent is because all his actions have a beginning. For whatever has a beginning must have a cause, and every cause is a necessary cause.

If anything can have a beginning which has no cause, then nothing can produce something. And if nothing can produce something, then the world might have had a beginning without a cause; which is not only an absurdity commonly charged on Atheists, but is a real absurdity in itself.⁵

Besides, if a cause be not a necessary cause, it is no cause at all. For if causes are not necessary causes, then causes are not suited to, or are indifferent to effects; and the Epicurean System of chance is rendered possible; and this orderly world might have been produced by a disorderly or fortuitous concurrence of atoms; or which is all one, by no cause at all. For in arguing against the Epicurean system of chance, do we not say (and that justly) that it is impossible for chance ever to have produced an orderly system of things, as not being a cause suited to the effect; and that an orderly system of things which had a beginning, must have had an intelligent agent

⁴ Bramhall's Works, p. 656, 662.

⁵ The phrase "commonly charged on Atheists" seems to show that Collins knew better than to charge it upon them himself.—G. W. F.

for its cause, as being the only proper cause to that effect? All which implies that causes are suited, or have relation to some particular effects, and not to others. And if they be suited to some particular effect and not to others, they can be no causes at all to those others. And therefore a cause not suited to the effect, and no cause, are the same thing. And if a cause not suited to the effect is no cause, then a cause suited to the effect is a necessary cause; for if it does not produce the effect, it is not suited to it, or is no cause at all of it.

Liberty therefore, or a power to act or not to act, to do this is another thing under the same causes, is an impossibility and atheistical.⁶

And as Liberty stands and can only be grounded on the absurd principle of Epicurean Atheism, so the Epicurean Atheists, who were the most popular and most numerous sect of the Atheists of antiquity, were the great⁷ asserters of Liberty⁸; as on the other side the

* "Atheistical" here is so grotesque that it can only be explained by what I have said in the Preface as to Collins having tried to circumvent his Christian opponents. To every student of philosophy there is an obvious equivoke in the preceding paragraph. The "Epicurean system of chance" simply involved the absence of supernatural determination in the universe, and not the absence of law and order arising from the constitution of things. As the word *chance* is usually employed, it means nothing but contingency, and contingency is nothing but ignorance. Where we know perfectly all the causes in operation we can predict the result; where we know them but partially we cannot predict with accuracy. For instance, it is certain that any particular man will die, but it is uncertain *when* he will die, and thus his death is contingent, or, as we say, a matter of chance, although when it happens it will be the necessary effect of the many and subtle causes that operated to produce it.—G. W. F.

⁷ Lucretius, l. 2, v. 250, etc. Eus. Prep. Ev., l. 6., c. 7.

⁸ The "Epicurean Atheists"—who were not Atheists in the sense of denying the existence of gods, but only in the sense of denying their interference in the affairs of the cosmos—can hardly be said to have been "assertors of liberty" in Collins's sense of the word. They did not deny causation, but strenuously affirmed it. Collins probably depended on Cudworth's *Intellectual System of the Universe*, a vast magazine of learning which has supplied many subsequent writers with what has passed for original scholarship

Stoics,⁹ who were the most popular and most numerous sect among the religionaries of antiquity, were the great asserters of Fate and Necessity. The case was also the same among the Jews, as among the heathen; the Jews, I say, who besides the light of nature, had many books of Revelation (some whereof are now lost) and who had intimate and personal conversation with God himself. They were principally divided into three sects, the Sadducees, the Pharisees, and the Essenes.¹ The Sadducees, who were esteemed an irreligious and atheistical sect,² maintained the liberty of man. But

Now it is remarked by Cudworth (Chap. V., § 1) that Epicurus not only rejected divination and prediction of future events because he denied providence, but "pretended this further reason also against it, because it was a thing absolutely inconsistent with liberty of will, and destructive of the same." But Diogenes Laertius, from whom Cudworth derived his information, does not represent Epicurus as holding the doctrine of Free Will as it is taught by modern divines, and as it was opposed by Collins. He speaks, like Collins, of the liberty to act as we please, but he does not teach that our choice is capricious and incalculable; and while he denies the tyranny of gods and the necessity of destiny, he also rebukes those who adore Fortune as a deity, although it contributes nothing to the course of events. On the whole, it would seem that Epicurus denied Necessity in the sense of a positive constraint upon our will, and not in the sense of what is called moral causation, which would be inconsistent with his teaching as to the cultivation of good habits.—G. W. F.

⁹ Cicero de Nat. Deor., l. 1.

¹ Josephus Antiq., l. 18, c. 2.

² With respect to the Sadducees also, I fancy Collins relied upon Cudworth. Our author's reference to Josephus is erroneous. In the section referred to, the Jewish historian deals only with their belief that death was the end of all. It is in two other places (*Antiquities*, Bk. xiii, ch. vi, § 9; and *Wars*, Bk. II., chap. viii., § 14) that he deals with their opinions on fate. He says that the Sadducees utterly rejected fate, that the Essenes absolutely accepted it, and that the Pharisees taught a mixture of fate and free-will. But this "fate" was obviously a divine constraint, and not a natural necessity; for the dispute among these sects was clearly upon whether—to use the very words of Josephus—God is concerned in our doing or not doing what is evil. Collins adds that the Sadducees were esteemed an irreligious and atheistical sects, but this is using language very loosely. They admitted the existence of God and kept the law: yet they were "irreligious" to this extent, that they would have no more religion than was absolutely necessary.—G. W. F.

the Pharisees, who were a religious sect, ascribed all things to fate, or to God's appointment, and it was the first article of their creed that fate and God do all³; and consequently they do not assert a true liberty, when they asserted a liberty together with this fatality and necessity of all things. And the Essenes, who were the most religious sect among the Jews, and fell not under the censure of our Savior for their hypocrisy as the Pharisees did, were asserters of absolute fate and necessity. St. Paul,⁴ who was a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee, is supposed by the learned Dodwell,⁵ to have received his doctrine of fate from the masters of that sect, as they received it from the Stoics. And he observes further, that the Stoic philosophy is necessary for the explication of Christian theology; that there are examples in the holy scriptures of the Holy Ghost's speaking according to the opinions of the Stoics, and that in particular the apostle St. Paul in what he has disputed concerning predestination and reprobation, is to be expounded according to the Stoics' opinion concerning fate. So that Liberty is both the real foundation of popular Atheism, and has been the professed principle of the Atheists themselves; as on the other side, Fate, or the necessity of events, has been esteemed a religious opinion and been the professed principle of the religious, both among heathens and Jews, and also of that great convert to Christianity and great converter of others, St. Paul.⁶

³ Jud. 1. 2, c. 7.

⁴ Acts xxiii., 6.

⁵ Proleg. ad Stearn. de Obstin. sect. 40 and 41.

⁶ This treatment of the Jewish sects shows that Collins was a shrewd polemist. By pressing religion into the service of his argument in this way he was wounding his adversaries in a vital place. The reference to St. Paul is extremely effective, besides proving that Collins had a sly humor. But, at this time of day, it must be said that the Jewish sects were really divided over *predestination*, and not over the doctrine of *moral causation*. Between them, as between the Epicureans and Stoics, it was the direction of human affairs by God or the gods that was in dispute, and by no means whether volition was determined by motives. Now that the real question of Free Will *versus* Determinism is

Third argument taken from the imperfection of Liberty.

III. Thirdly, Liberty is contended for by the patrons thereof as a great perfection. In order therefore to disprove all pretences for it, I will now show that according to all the various descriptions given of it by theologians and philosophers, it would often be an imperfection, but never a perfection, as I have in the last article showed it to be impossible and atheistical.

1. If Liberty⁷ be defined a power to pass different judgments at the same instant of time upon the same individual propositions that are not evident (we being, as it is owned necessarily determined to pass but one judgment on evident propositions) it will follow that men will be so far irrational, and by consequence imperfect agents, as they have that freedom of judgment. For, since they would be irrational agents, if they were capable of judging evident propositions not to be evident, they must be also deemed irrational agents if they are capable of judging the self-same probable or improbable propositions not to be probable or improbable. The appearances of all propositions to us, whether evident, probable or improbable, are the sole rational grounds of our judgments in relation to them, and the appearances of probable or improbable propositions, are no less necessary in us from the respective reasons by which they appear probable or improbable, than are the appearances of evident propositions from the reasons by which they appear evident. Wherefore if it be rational and a perfection to be determined by an evident appearance, it is no less so to be determined by a probable or improbable appearance, and consequently an imperfection not to be so determined.

It is not only an absurdity, and by consequence an imperfection, not to be equally and necessarily deter-

being discussed, the tables are completely turned. It is the Atheists who maintain Determinism, while the Christians largely maintain Free Will.—G. W. F.

⁷ Le Clerc. Bibl. Chois., tom. xii. p. 88, 89.

mined in our respective judgments, by probable and improbable, as well as by evident appearances, which I have just now proved ; but even not to be necessarily determined by probable appearances would be a greater imperfection than not to be necessarily determined by evident appearances, because almost all our actions are founded on the probable appearances of things, and few on the evident appearance of things. And therefore, if we could judge that what appears probable is not probable, but improbable or false, we should be without the best rule of action and assent we can have.

2. Were Liberty defined a power to overcome our reason by the force of choice, as a celebrated author⁸ may be supposed to mean when he says⁹ the will seems to have so great a power over the understanding being overruled by the election of the will, not only takes what is good to be evil, but is also compelled to admit what is false to be true ; man would, with the exercise of such a power, be the most irrational and inconsistent being, and by consequence the most imperfect understanding being which can be conceived. For what can be more irrational and inconsistent than to be able to refuse our assent to what is evidently true to us, and to assent to what we see to be evidently false, and thereby inwardly give the lie to the understanding ?

3. Were Liberty defined¹ a power to will evil (knowing it to be evil) as well as good ; that would be an imperfection in man, considered as a sensible being, if it be an imperfection in such a being to be miserable. For willing evil is choosing to be miserable, and bringing knowingly destruction on ourselves. Men are already sufficiently unhappy by their several volitions ; founded on the wrong use of their faculties, and on the mistaken appearances of things. But what

⁸ William King, Archbishop of Dublin. His work on the *Origin of Evil*, composed in Latin, was translated into English by Edmund Law, who supplied a great quantity of annotations. Both the author and his commentator were men of great ability, the Bishop in especial having an original turn of mind.—G. W. F.

⁹ King de Orig. Mali., p. 131. ¹ Cheyne's Phil. Prin., c. 3, s. 13.

miserable beings would they be, if instead of choosing evil under the appearance of good (which is the only case wherein men now choose evil) they were indifferent to good and evil, and had the power to choose evil as evil, and did actually choose evil as evil in virtue of that power? They would, in such a state, or with such a liberty, be like infants that cannot walk, left to go alone, with Liberty to fall; or like children, with knives in their hands; or lastly, like young rope-dancers, left to themselves, on their first essays upon the rope, without anyone to catch them if they fall. And this miserable state following from the supposition of Liberty, is so visible to some of the greatest advocates thereof,² that they acknowledge that created beings, when in a state of happiness, cease to have Liberty³ (that is, cease to have Liberty to choose evil) being inviolably attached to their duty by the actual enjoyment of their felicity.

4. Were Liberty defined, as it is by some, a power to will or choose at the same time any one out of two or more indifferent things; that would be no perfection. For those things called here indifferent or alike may be considered either as really different from each other, and that only seem indifferent or alike to us through our want of discernment; or as exactly like each other. Now the more Liberty we have in the first kind, that is, the more instances there are of things which seem alike to us, and are not alike, the more mistakes and wrong choices we must run into. For if we had just notions, we should know those things were not indifferent or alike. This Liberty therefore would be founded on a direct imperfection of our faculties. And as to a power of choosing differently at the same time among things, really indifferent; what benefit, what perfection would such a power of choosing be, when the things that are the sole objects of our free choice are all alike?

² Bibl. Chois, tom. xii., p. 95.

³ Bramhall's Works, p. 655.

5. Lastly, a celebrated author seems to understand by Liberty, a faculty, which being indifferent to objects, and over-ruling our passions, appetites, sensations, and reason, chooses arbitrarily among objects; and renders the object chosen agreeable, only because it has chosen it.

My design here is to consider this definition, with the same view that I have considered the several foregoing definitions, viz., to show that Liberty, inconsistent with Necessity, however described or defined, is an imperfection. Referring therefore my reader for a confutation of this new notion of Liberty to the other parts of my book, wherein I have already proved that the existence of such an arbitrary faculty is contrary to experience, and impossible; that our passions, appetites, sensations, and reason, determine us in our several choices; and that we choose objects because they please us, and not as the author pretends, that objects please us only because we choose them: I proceed to show the imperfection of this last kind of Liberty.

1. First, the pleasure of happiness accruing from the Liberty here asserted is less than accrues from the hypothesis of Necessity.

All the pleasure and happiness said to attend this pretended Liberty consists wholly in creating pleasure and happiness by choosing objects.

Now man, considered as an intelligent necessary agent, would no less create this pleasure and happiness to himself by choosing objects, than a being endued with the said faculty: if it be true in fact, that things please us because we choose them.

But man, as an intelligent necessary agent, has these further pleasures and advantages. He, by not being indifferent to objects, is moved by the goodness and agreeableness of them as they appear to him, and as he knows them by reflection and experience. It is not in his power to be indifferent to what causes pleasure or pain. He cannot resist the pleasure aris-

ing from the use of his passions; appetites, senses, and reason; and if he suspends his choice of an object, that is presented to him by any of these powers as agreeable; it is because he doubts or examines whether upon the whole the object would make him happy, and because he would gratify all these powers in the best manner he is able, or at least such of these powers as he conceives tend most to his happiness. If he makes a choice which proves disagreeable, he gets thereby an experience which may qualify him to choose the next time with more satisfaction to himself. And thus wrong choices may turn to his advantage for the future. So that, at all times, and under all circumstances, he is pursuing and enjoying the greatest happiness which his condition will allow.

It may not be improper to observe that some of the pleasures he receives from objects are so far from being the effect of choice, that they are not the effect of the least premeditation, or any act of his own, as in finding a treasure on the road, or in receiving a legacy from a person unknown to him.

2. Secondly, this arbitrary⁴ faculty would subject a man to more wrong choices, that if he was determined in his choice.

A man determined in his choice by the appearing nature of things, and the usage of his intellectual powers, never makes a wrong choice, but by mistaking the true relation of things to him. But a being, indifferent to all objects, and swayed by no motives in his choice of objects, chooses at a venture; and only makes a right choice when it happens (as the author justly expresses his notion) that he chooses an object, which he can by his creating power render so agreeable, as that it may be called a rightly chosen object. Nor can this faculty be improved by any experience: but must ever continue to choose at a venture, or as it happens. For if this faculty improves by experience,

⁴ Bramhall's Works, p. 147 to 150.

and will have regard to the agreeableness or disagreeableness of objects in themselves, it is no longer the faculty contended for, but a faculty moved and affected by the nature of things.

So that man, with a faculty of choice indifferent to all objects, must make more wrong choices than man considered as a necessary being; in the same proportion, as acting as it happens, is a worse direction to choose right, than the use of our senses, experience, and reason.

3. Thirdly, the existence of such an arbitrary faculty, to choose without regard to the qualities of objects, would destroy the use of our senses, appetites, passions, and reason; which have been given us to direct us in our inquiries after truth, in our pursuit after happiness, and to preserve our beings. For if we had a faculty, which chose without regard to the notices and advertisements of these powers, and by its choice over-ruled them, we should then be endued with a faculty to defeat the end and uses of these powers.

The perfection of Necessity.

But the imperfection of Liberty inconsistent with Necessity will yet more appear by considering the great perfection of being necessarily determined.

Can anything be perfect that is not necessarily perfect? For whatever is not necessarily perfect may be imperfect, and is by consequence imperfect.

Is it not a perfection in God necessarily to know all truth?

Is it not a perfection in him to be necessarily happy?

Is it not also a perfection in him to will and do always what is best? For if all things are indifferent to him, as some of the advocates of Liberty assert,^s and become good only by his willing them, he cannot have any motive from his own ideas, or from the nature of things, to will one thing rather than another, and consequently he must will without any reason or cause,

^s King de Orig. Mali., p. 177.

which cannot be conceived possible of any being, and is contrary to this self-evident, truth that whatever has a beginning must have a cause. But if things are not indifferent to him, he must be necessarily determined by what is best. Besides, as he is a wise being, he must have some end and design, and as he is a good being, things cannot be indifferent to him, when the happiness of intelligent and sensible beings depend on the will he has in the formation of things. With what consistency, therefore, can those advocates of Liberty assert God to be a holy and good being, who maintain that all things are indifferent to him before he wills anything, and that he may will and do all things which they themselves esteem wicked and unjust?

I cannot give a better confirmation of this argument from the consideration of the attributes of God than by the judgment of the late Bishop of Sarum,⁶ which has the more weight as proceeding from a great assertor of Liberty, who by the force of truth is driven to say what he does. He grants that infinite perfection excludes successive thoughts in God, and therefore that the essence of God⁷ is one perfect thought, in which he views and wills all things. And though his transient acts, such as creation, providence, and miracles, are done in a succession of time; yet his immanent acts, his knowledge and decrees, are one with his essence. And as he grants this to be a true notion of God, so he allows that a vast difficulty arises from it against the Liberty of God. For, says he, the immanent acts of God being supposed free, it is not easy to imagine how they should be one with the divine essence; to which necessary existence does most certainly belong. And if the immanent acts of God are necessary, then the transient must be so likewise, as

⁶ Gilbert Burnet, a well-known author of some historical works. He was satirised for his egotism and tediousness by Pope and Swift. The work here referred to is his treatise on the Thirty-Nine Articles, which is still in use.

⁷ Expos., p. 26, 27

being the certain effects of his immanent acts ; and a chain of necessary fate must run through the whole order of things ; and God himself then is no free being, but acts by a necessity of nature. And this necessity, to which God is thus subject, is, adds he, no absurdity to some. God is, according to them, necessarily just, true, and good, by an intrinsic Necessity that arises from his own infinite perfection. And from hence they have thought that since God acts by infinite wisdom and goodness, things could not have been otherwise than they are ; for what is infinitely wise or good cannot be altered, or made either better or worse. And he concludes that he “must leave this difficulty without pretending to explain it, or answer the objections that arise against all the several ways by which divines have endeavored to resolve it.”

Again,⁸ are not angels and other heavenly beings esteemed more perfect than men ; because, having a clear insight into the nature of things, they are necessarily determined to judge right in relation to truth and falsehood, and to choose right in relation to good and evil, pleasure and pain ; and also to act right in pursuance of their judgment and choice ? And therefore would not man be more perfect than he is, if, by having a clear insight into the nature of things, he was necessarily determined to assent to truth only, to choose only such objects as would make him happy, and to act accordingly ?

Further, is not man more perfect the more capable he is of conviction ? And will he not be more capable of conviction if he be necessarily determined in his assent by what seems a reason to him, and necessarily determined in his several volitions by what seems good to him, than if he was indifferent to propositions, notwithstanding any reason for them, or was indifferent to any objects, notwithstanding they seemed good to him ? for otherwise he could be

⁸ Bramhall's Works, p. 656 and 695.

convinced upon no other principles, and would be the most undisciplinable and untractable of all animals. All advice and all reasonings would be of no use to him. You might offer arguments to him, and lay before him pleasure and pain; and he might stand unmoved like a rock. He might reject what appears true to him, assent to what seems absurd to him, avoid what he sees to be good, and choose what he sees to be evil. Indifference therefore to receive truth, that is Liberty to deny it when we see it; and indifference to pleasure and pain, that is, Liberty to refuse the first, and choose the last; are direct obstacles to knowledge and happiness. On the contrary, to be necessarily determined by what seems reasonable, and by what seems good, has a direct tendency to promote truth and happiness, and is the proper perfection of an understanding and sensible being. And indeed it seems strange that men should allow that God and angels act more perfectly because they are determined by reason; and also allow that clocks, watches, mills, and other artificial unintelligent beings are the better, the more they are determined to go right by weight and measure; and yet that they should deem in a perfection in man not to be determined by his reason, but to have Liberty to go against it.* Would it not be as reasonable to say, it would be a perfection in a clock not to be necessarily determined to go right, but to have its motions depend upon chance?

Again, though man does, through weakness and imperfection, fall into several mistakes, both in judging

* "I protest," says Professor Huxley in his lecture on Descartes "that if some great Power would agree to make me always think what is true and do what is right, on condition of being turned into a sort of clock and wound up every morning before I got out of bed, I should instantly close with the offer. The only freedom I care about is the freedom to do right; the freedom to do wrong I am ready to part with on the cheapest terms to any one who will take it of me" (*Lay Sermons*, p. 340). Professor Huxley has read Collins, and he may have had the above passage in his mind.
—G. W. F.

and willing, in relation to what is true and good ; yet he is still less ignorant, and less unhappy, by being necessarily determined in judging by what seems reasonable, and in willing by what seems best, than if he was capable of judging contrary to his reason and willing against his senses. For, were it not so, what seems false would be as just a rule of truth as what seems true, and what seems evil as just a rule of good as what seems good. Which are absurdities too great for any to affirm ; especially if we consider that there is a perfectly wise and good Being who has given men senses and reason to conduct them.

Lastly, it is a perfection to be necessarily determined in our choices, even in the most indifferent things ; because if in such cases there was not a cause of choice, but a choice could be made without a cause, then all choices might be made without a cause, and we should not be necessarily determined by the greatest evidence to assent to truth, nor by the strongest inclination for happiness to choose pleasure and avoid pain ; to all which it is a perfection to be necessarily determined. For if any action whatsoever can be done without a cause, then effects and causes have no necessary relation, and by consequence we should not be necessarily determined in any case at all.

Fourth argument, taken from the consideration of the divine prescience.

IV. A fourth argument to prove man a necessary agent shall be taken from the consideration of the divine prescience. The divine prescience supposes that all things future will certainly exist in such time, such order, and with such circumstances, and not otherwise. For if any things future were contingent, or uncertain, or depended on the liberty of man—that is, might or might not happen—their certain existence could not be the object of the divine prescience, it being a contradiction to know that to be certain which is not certain, and God himself could only guess at the existence of

such things. And if the divine prescience supposes the certain existence of all things future, it supposes also the necessary existence of all things future, because God can foreknow their certain existence only, either as that existence is the effect of his decree or as it depends on its own causes. If he foreknows that existence as it is the effect of his decree, his decree makes that existence necessary, for it implies a contradiction for an all-powerful being to decree anything which shall not necessarily come to pass. If he foreknows that existence as it depends on its own causes, that existence is no less necessary, for it no less implies a contradiction that causes should not produce their effects (causes and effects having a necessary relation to and dependence on each other) than that an event should not come to pass which is decreed by God.

Cicero has some passages to the purpose of this argument. Says he,¹ “*Qui potest provideri quidquam futurum esse quod neque causam habet ullam, neque notam, cur futurum fit?—Quid est igitur, quod casu fieri aut forte fortuna, putemus?—Nihil est enim tam contrarium rationi & constantia quam fortuna; ut mihi ne in Deum cadere videatur, ut sciat, quid casu & fortuito futurum fit. Si enim scit, certe illud eveniet. Sin certe eveniet, nulla est fortuna. Est autem fortuna. Rerum igitur fortuitarum nulla est presentio.*” Also that illustrious reformer, Luther, says in his treatise against free will²: “*Concessa Dei præscientia & omnipotentia, sequitur naturaliter irrefragabili consequentia, nos per nos ipsos non esse factos, nec vivere, nec agere quicquam, sed per illius omnipotentiam. Cum autem tales nos ille ante præscierit futuros, talesque nunc faciat, moveat, & gubernit; quid potest fingi quæso, quod in nobis liberum fit, aliter & aliter fieri, quam ille præscierit aut nunc agat? Pugnat itaque ex diametro præscientia & omnipotentia Dei cum nostro libero arbitrio. Aut enim Deus*

¹ De Divin. c. 2.

² Cap. 147.

falletur præsciendo, errabit & agendo (quod est impossibile) aut nos agemus & agemur secundum ipsius præscientiam & actionem." And our learned Dr. South says³, "the fore-knowledge of an event does certainly and necessarily infer that there must be such an event; forasmuch as the certainty of knowledge depends upon the certainty of the thing known. And in this sense it is that God's decree and promise give a necessary existence to the thing decreed or promised, that is to say, they infer it by infallible consequence; so that it was as impossible for Christ not to rise from the dead, as it was for God absolutely to decree and promise a thing, and yet the thing not come to pass."

I could also bring in the greatest divines and philosophers⁴ who are assertors of Liberty, as confirming this argument; for⁵ they acknowledge that they are unable to reconcile the⁶ divine prescience and the Liberty of man together, which is all I intended to prove by this argument, taken from the consideration of the divine prescience.

Fifth argument, taken from the nature of Rewards and Punishments.

V. A fifth argument to prove man a necessary agent is as follows: If man was not a necessary agent, determined by pleasure and pain, there would be no foundation for rewards and punishments, which are the essential supports of society.⁷

For if men were not necessarily determined by pleasure and pain, or if pleasure and pain were no causes to determine men's wills; of what use would be the prospect of rewards to frame a man's will to the observation of the law, or punishments to hinder his trans-

³ Sermons, vol. iii., p. 488.

⁴ See among others Cartes. Prin. Pars. I., Art. 41. Locke's Letters, p. 27.

⁵ Tillotson's Sermons, VI., p. 157.

⁶ Stillingfleet of Christ's Satisfaction, p. 355.

⁷ Solon rempublicam contineri dicebat duabus rebus, præmio & pœnâ. Cicero Epist. 15 ad Brutum.

gression thereof? Were pain, as such, eligible, and pleasure, as such, avoidable; rewards and punishments could be no motives to a man, to make him do or forbear any action. But if pleasure and pain have a necessary effect on men, and if it be impossible for men not to choose what seems good to them, and not to avoid what seems evil, the necessity of rewards and punishments is then evident, and rewards will be of use to all those who conceive those rewards to be pleasure, and punishments will be of use to all those who conceive them to be pain; and rewards and punishments will frame those men's wills to observe and not transgress the laws.

Besides, since there are so many robbers, murderers, whore-masters, and other criminals, who notwithstanding the punishments threatened, and rewards promised, by laws, prefer breaking the laws as the greater good or lesser evil, and reject conformity to them as the greater evil or lesser good; how many more would there be, and with what disorders would not all societies be filled, if rewards and punishments, considered as pleasure and pain, did not determine some men's wills, but that, instead thereof, all men could prefer or will, punishment considered as pain, and reject rewards considered as pleasure? Men would then be under no restraints.

Sixth argument taken from the Nature of Morality.

VI. My sixth and last argument to prove man a necessary agent is; if man was not a necessary agent determined by pleasure and pain, he would have no notion of morality, or motive to practise it; the distinction between morality and immorality, virtue and vice, would be lost; and man would not be a moral agent.

Morality or Virtue,^s consists of such actions as are

^s Locke's Essay of H. Un., l. ii., c. 20. Serjeant's Sol. Philos. Asserted, p. 215.

in their own nature, and upon the whole pleasant; and immorality or vice, consists in such actions as are in their own nature, and upon the whole painful. Wherefore a man must be affected with pleasure and pain in order to know what morality is, and to distinguish it from immorality. He must also be affected with pleasure and pain to have a reason to practise morality; for there can be no motives but pleasure and pain to make a man do or forbear any action. And a man must be the more moral the more he understands or is duly sensible, what actions give pleasure and what pain; and must be perfectly moral if necessarily determined by pleasure and pain rightly understood and apprehended. But if man be indifferent to pleasure and pain, or is not duly affected with them, he cannot know what morality is nor distinguish it from immorality, nor have any motive to practise morality and abstain from immorality; and will be equally indifferent to morality and immorality or virtue and vice. Man in his present condition is sufficiently immoral by mistaking pain for pleasure and thereby judging, willing, and practising amiss; but if he was indifferent to pleasure and pain, he would have no rule to go by, and might never judge, will, and practise right.

Though I conceive I have so proposed my arguments as to have obviated most of the plausible objections usually urged against the doctrine of Necessity, yet it may not be improper to give a particular solution to the principal of them.

1. First then it is objected that if men are necessary agents,⁹ and do commit necessarily all breaches of the law, it would be unjust to punish them for doing what they cannot avoid doing.

To which I answer that the sole end of punishment in society is to prevent, as far as may be, the commission of certain crimes; and that punishments have

⁹ Auli Gellii noctes Att., l. 6, c. 2.

their designed effect two ways ; first, by restraining or cutting off from society the vicious members ; and secondly, by correcting men or terrifying them from the commission of those crimes. Now let punishments be inflicted with either of these views, it will be manifest that no regard is had to any free agency in man, in order to render those punishments just ; but that on the contrary, punishments may be justly inflicted on man, though a necessary agent. For, first, if murderers for example, or any such vicious members are cut off from society, merely as they are public nuisances and unfit to live among men ; it is plain they are in that case so far from being considered as free agents that they are cut off from society as a cankered branch is from a tree, or as a mad dog is killed in the streets. And the punishment of such men is just, as it takes mischievous members out of society. Also, for the same reason, furious madmen, whom all allow to be necessary agents, are in many places of the world either the objects of judicial punishments, or be allowed to be dispatched by private men. Nay, even men infected with the plague, who are not voluntary agents and are guilty of no crime, are sometimes thought to be justly cut off from society to prevent contagion from them.

Secondly, let punishments be inflicted on some criminals with a view to terrify, it will appear that in inflicting punishments with that view, no regard is had to any free agency in man in order to make those punishments just. To render the punishment of such men just, it is sufficient that they were voluntary agents, or had the will to do the crime for which they suffer, for the law very justly and rightly regardeth only the will, and no other preceding causes of action. For example, suppose the law, on pain of death, forbids theft, and there be a man who, by the strength of temptation, is necessitated to steal, and is thereupon put to death for it ; doth not his punishment deter others from theft ? Is it not a cause that others steal

not? doth it not frame their wills to justice? Whereas a criminal who is an involuntary agent (as for instance a man who has killed another in a chance medly, or while in a fever or the like) cannot serve for an example to deter any others from doing the same, he being no more an intelligent agent in doing the crime than a house is which kills a man by its fall, and by consequence the punishment of such an involuntary agent would be unjust. When therefore a man does a crime voluntarily, and his punishment will serve to deter others from doing the same, he is justly punished for doing what (through strength of temptation, ill habits, or other causes) he could not avoid doing.

It may not be improper to add this farther consideration from the law of our country. There is one case wherein our law is so far from requiring that the persons punished should be free agents, that it does not consider them as voluntary agents, or even as guilty of the crime for which they suffer: so little is free agency requisite to make punishments just. The children of rebel parents suffer in their fortunes for the guilt of their parents, and their punishment is deemed just, because it is supposed to be a means to prevent rebellion in parents.

II. Secondly, it is objected that it is useless to threaten punishment, or inflict it on men to prevent crimes, when they are necessarily determined in all their actions.

1. To which I answer first, that threatening of punishments is a cause which necessarily determines some men's wills to a conformity to law, and against committing the crimes to which punishments are annexed, and therefore is useful to all those whose wills must be determined by it. It is as useful to such men, as the sun is to the ripening the fruits of the earth, or as any other causes are to produce their proper effects, and a man may as well say the sun is useless, if the ripening the fruits of the earth be necessary, as say there is no need of threatening punishment for the

use of those to whom threatening punishment is a necessary cause of forbearing to do a crime. It is also of use to society to inflict punishments on men for doing what they cannot avoid doing, to the end that necessary causes may exist to form the wills of those who in virtue of them necessarily observe the laws, and also of use to cut them off as noxious members of society.

2. But secondly, so far is threatening and inflicting punishments from being useless, if men are necessary agents, that it would be useless to correct and deter (which are the principal effects designed to be obtained by threatening and inflicting punishments) unless men were necessary agents, and were determined by pleasure and pain; because if men were free or indifferent to pleasure and pain, pain could be no motive to cause men to observe the law.

3. Thirdly, men have every day examples before them of the usefulness of punishments upon some intelligent or sensible beings, which they all contend are necessary agents. They punish dogs, horses, and other animals every day with great success, and make them leave off their vicious habits, and form them thereby according to their wills. These are plain facts, and matters of constant experience, and even confirmed by the evasions of the advocates of Liberty, who call¹ the rewards and punishments used to brute beasts analogical; and say that beating them and giving them victuals have only the shadow of rewards and punishments. Nor are capital punishments without their use among beasts and birds. Rorarius² tells us that they crucify lions in Africa to drive away other lions from their cities and towns; and that travelling through the country of Juliers, he observed they hanged up wolves to secure their flocks. And in like manner with us, men hang up crows and rooks to keep birds from their

¹ Bramhall's Works, p. 685.

² Quad bruta anim, etc., l. 2, p. 109

corn, as they hang up murderers in chains to deter other murderers. But I need not go to brutes for examples of the usefulness of punishments on necessary agents. Punishments are not without effect on some idiots and madmen, by restraining them to a certain degree; and they are the very means by which the minds of children are formed by their parents. Nay, punishments have plainly a better effect on children than on grown persons, and more easily form them to virtue and discipline than they change the vicious habits of grown persons or plant new habits in them. Wherefore the objectors ought to think punishments may be threatened and inflicted on men usefully, though they are necessary agents.

III. Thirdly, it is objected, if men are necessary agents it is of no use to represent reasons to them, or to entreat them, or to admonish them, or to blame them, or to praise them.

To which I answer, that all these, according to me, are necessary causes to determine certain men's wills to do what we desire of them; and are therefore useful as acting on such necessary agents to whom they are necessary causes of action; but would be of no use if men had free-will, or their wills were not moved by them. So that they who make this objection must run into the absurdities of saying that that cause is useful, which is no cause of action and serves not to change the will, and that that cause is useless which necessitates the effect.

Let me add something further in respect of praise. Men have at all times been praised for actions judged by all the world to be necessary. It has been a standing method of commendation among the epic poets, who are the greatest panegyrists of glorious actions, to attribute their hero's valor, and his great actions, to some deity present with him and assisting. Homer gives many of his heroes a god or a goddess to attend them in battle or be ready to help them in distress. Virgil describes *Æneas* as always under the divine

direction and assistance. And Tasso gives the Christians in their holy war, divine assistance.

Orators also, and historians think necessary actions the proper subjects of praise.³ Cicero, when he maintained that the Gods inspired Milo with the design and courage to kill Clodius, did not intend to lessen the satisfaction or glory of Milo, but on the contrary to augment it. But can there be a finer commendation than that given by Velleius Paterculus to Cato, that he was good by nature because he could not be otherwise? For that alone is true goodness which flows from disposition, whether that disposition be natural or acquired. Such goodness may be depended on, and will seldom or never fail. Whereas goodness founded on any reasonings whatsoever, is a very precarious thing; as may be seen by the lives of the greatest declaimers against vice who, though they are constantly acquainting themselves with all the topics that can be drawn from the excellency of goodness or virtue, and the mischiefs of vice; the rewards that attend the one and the punishments that attend the other; yet are not better than those who are never conversant in such topics. Lastly, the common proverb, *gaudeant bene nati*, is a general commendation of men for what plainly in no sense depends on them.

IV. Fourthly, it is objected that if all events are necessary, then there is a period fixed to every man's life, and if there is a period fixed to every man's life, then it cannot be shortened by want of care or violence offered or disease, nor can it be prolonged by care or physic, and if it cannot be shortened or prolonged by them, then it is useless to avoid or use any of these things.

In answer to which, I grant that if the period of human life be fixed (as I contend it is) it cannot but happen at the time fixed, and nothing can fall out to prolong or shorten that period. Neither such want of

³ Oratio pro Milone.

care nor such violence offered, nor such diseases can happen, as can cause the period of human life to fall short of that time, nor such care nor physic be used, as to prolong it beyond that time. But though these cannot so fall out, as to shorten or prolong the period of human life, yet being necessary causes in the chain of causes to bring human life to the period fixed, or to cause it not to exceed that time, they must as necessarily precede that effect, as other causes do their proper effects, and consequently when used or neglected serve all the ends and purposes that can be hoped for or feared from use of any means, or the neglect of any means whatsoever. For example, let it be fixed and necessary for the river Nile annually to overflow, the means to cause it to overflow must no less necessarily precede. And as it would be absurd to argue that if the overflowing of the Nile was annually fixed and necessary, it would overflow, though the necessary means to make it overflow did not precede, so it is no less absurd to argue from the fixed period of human life, against the necessary means to bring it to its fixed period, or to cause it not to exceed that period.

V. Fifthly, it is asked how a man can act against his conscience, and how a man's conscience can accuse him if he knows he acts necessarily, and also does what he thinks best when he commits any sin.

I reply, that conscience being a man's own opinion of his actions with relation to some rule, he may at the time of doing an action contrary to that rule, know that he breaks that rule, and consequently act with reluctance, though not sufficient to hinder the action. But after the action is over he may not only judge his action to be contrary to that rule; but by the absence of the pleasure of the sin, and by finding himself obnoxious to shame, or believing himself liable to punishment, he may really accuse himself, that is, he may condemn himself for having done it, be sorry he has done it, and wish it undone because of the consequences that attend it.

VI. Sixthly, it is objected, that if all events are necessary, it was as impossible (for example) for Julius Cæsar not to have died in the Senate, as it is impossible for two and two to make six. But who will say the former was as impossible as the latter is, when we can conceive it possible for Julius Cæsar to have died any where else as well as in the Senate, and impossible to conceive two and two ever to make six?

To which I answer, that I do allow that if all events are necessary, it was impossible for Julius Cæsar not to have died in the Senate, as it is impossible for two and two to make six, and will add, that it is no more possible to conceive the death of Julius Cæsar to have happened any where else but in the Senate, than that two and two should make six. For whoever does conceive his death possible any where else, supposes other circumstances preceding his death than did precede his death. Whereas, let them suppose all the same circumstances to come up to pass that did precede his death, and then it will be impossible to conceive (if they think justly) his death could have come to pass any where else, as they conceive it impossible for two and two to make six. I observe also, that to suppose other circumstances of any action possible than those that precede it, is to suppose a contradiction or impossibility, for as all actions have their particular circumstances, so every circumstance preceding an action is as impossible not to have come to pass by virtue of the causes preceding that circumstance, as that two and two should make six.

The opinions of the learned concerning Liberty, etc.

Having as I hope proved the truth of what I have advanced, and answered the most material objections that can be urged against me; it will perhaps not be improper to give some account of the sentiments of the learned in relation to my subject, and confirm by

authority what I have said for the sake of those with whom authority has weight in matters of speculation.

The questions of Liberty, Necessity, and chance have been subjects of dispute among philosophers at all times; and most of those philosophers have clearly asserted Necessity, and denied Liberty and chance.

The questions of Liberty and Necessity have also been debated among divines in the several ages of the Christian church, under the terms of free-will and predestination, and the divines who have denied free will and asserted predestination have enforced the arguments of the philosopher by the consideration of some doctrines peculiar to the Christian religion. And as to chance, hazard or fortune, I think divines unanimously agree that those words have no meaning.

Some Christian communions have even proceeded so far in relation to these matters, as to condemn in councils and synods the doctrine of Free Will as heretical; and the denial thereof is become a part of the Confessions of Faith, and Articles of Religion of several churches.⁴

From this state of the fact it is manifest that whoever embraces the opinion I have maintained cannot want the authority of as many learned and pious men as in embracing the contrary.

But considering how little men are moved by the authority of those who professedly maintain opinions contrary to theirs, though at the same time they themselves embrace no opinion but on the authority of somebody, I shall waive all the advantages that I might draw from the authority of such philosophers and divines as are undoubtedly on my side, and for that reason shall not enter into a more particular detail of

⁴ Both the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Articles of the Church of England distinctly deny Free Will and assert Predestination. Yet the zealots of the Establishment, after subscribing the Thirty-Nine Articles, are the most strenuous supporters of Liberty, and fierce and contemptuous in their opposition to Necessity.—G. W. F.

them, but shall offer the authority of such men who profess to maintain Liberty. There are indeed very few real adversaries to the opinion I defend among those who pretend to be so; and upon due inquiry it will be found that most of those who assert Liberty in words, deny the thing when the question is rightly stated. For proof whereof let any man examine the clearest and acutest authors who have written for Liberty, or discourse with those who think Liberty a matter of experience, and he will see that they allow that the will follows the judgment of the understanding, and that when two objects are presented to man's choice, one whereof appears better than the other, he cannot choose the worst—that is, cannot choose evil as evil. And since they acknowledge these things to be true they yield up the question of Liberty to their adversaries, who only contend that the will or choice is always determined by what seems best. I will give my reader one example thereof in the most acute and ingenious Dr. Clarke, whose authority is equal to that of many others put together, and makes it needless to cite others after him. He asserts^s that the will is determined by moral motives, and calls the Necessity by which a man chooses in virtue of those motives, moral Necessity. And he explains himself with his usual candor and perspicuity by the following instance. "A man," says he, "entirely free from all pain of body and disorder of mind, judges it unreasonable for him to hurt or destroy himself; and being under no temptation or external violence he cannot possibly act contrary to this judgment, not because he wants a natural or physical power so to do, but because it is absurd and mischievous, and morally impossible for him to choose to do it. Which also is the very same reason why the most perfect rational creatures, superior to men, cannot do evil; not because they want a natural

^s "Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God," p. 105 of the 4th edition, 1716.

power to perform the material action, but because it is morally impossible that with a perfect knowledge of what is best and without any temptation to evil, their will should determine itself to choose to act foolishly and unreasonably."

In this he plainly allows the necessity for which I have contended. For he assigns the same causes of human actions that I have done, and extends the necessity of human actions as far, when he asserts that a man cannot under those causes possibly do the contrary to what he does; and particularly that a man under the circumstances of judging it unreasonable to hurt or destroy himself, and being under no temptation or external violence, cannot possibly act contrary to that judgment. And as to a natural or physical power in man to act contrary to that judgment, and to hurt or destroy himself, which is asserted in the foregoing passage, that is so far from being inconsistent with the doctrine of Necessity, that the said natural power to do the contrary, or to hurt or destroy himself, is a consequence of the doctrine of Necessity. For if man is necessarily determined by particular moral causes, and cannot then possibly act contrary to what he does, he must under opposite moral causes, have a power to do the contrary. Man as determined by moral causes, cannot possibly choose evil as evil, and by consequence chooses life before death, while he apprehends life to be a good and death to be an evil; as, on the contrary, he chooses death before life, while he apprehends death to be a good and life to be an evil. And thus moral causes, by being different from one another, or differently understood, do determine men differently, and by consequence suppose a natural power to choose and act as differently as those causes differently determine them.

If therefore men will be governed by authority in the questions before us, let them sum up the real asserters of the Liberty of man, and they will find them not to be very numerous, but on the contrary,

they will find far the greater part of the pretended assertors of Liberty to be real asserters of Necessity.

The Author's notion of Liberty.

I shall conclude this discourse with observing that though I have contended that Liberty from Necessity is contrary to experience; that it is impossible; and if possible, that it is imperfection; that it is inconsistent with the divine perfections; and that it is subversive of laws and morality; yet to prevent all objections to me, founded on the equivocal use of the word Liberty, which, like other words employed in debates of consequence, has various meanings affixed to it, I think myself obliged to declare my opinion that I take man to have a truly valuable Liberty of another kind. He has a power to do as he wills or pleases. Thus, if he wills or pleases to speak, or be silent, to sit or stand, to ride or walk, to go this way or that way, to move fast or slow; or, in fine, if his will changes like a weathercock; he is able to do as he wills or pleases, unless prevented by some restraint or compulsion, as by being gagged, being under an acute pain, being forced out of his place, being confined, having convulsive motions, having lost the use of his limbs, or such-like causes.

He has also the same power in relation to the actions of his mind, as to those of his body. If he wills or pleases, he can think of this or that subject, stop short, or pursue his thoughts, deliberate, or defer deliberation, as he pleases, resolve or suspend his resolution as he pleases, unless prevented by pain, or a fit of an apoplexy, or some such intervening restraint or compulsion.

And is it not a great perfection in man to be able in relation both to his thoughts and actions, to do as he wills or pleases in all those cases of pleasure and interest? Nay, can a greater and more beneficial power in man be conceived than to be able to do as he wills or pleases? And can any other Liberty be conceived beneficial to him? Had he this power or Liberty in all things, he would be omnipotent!



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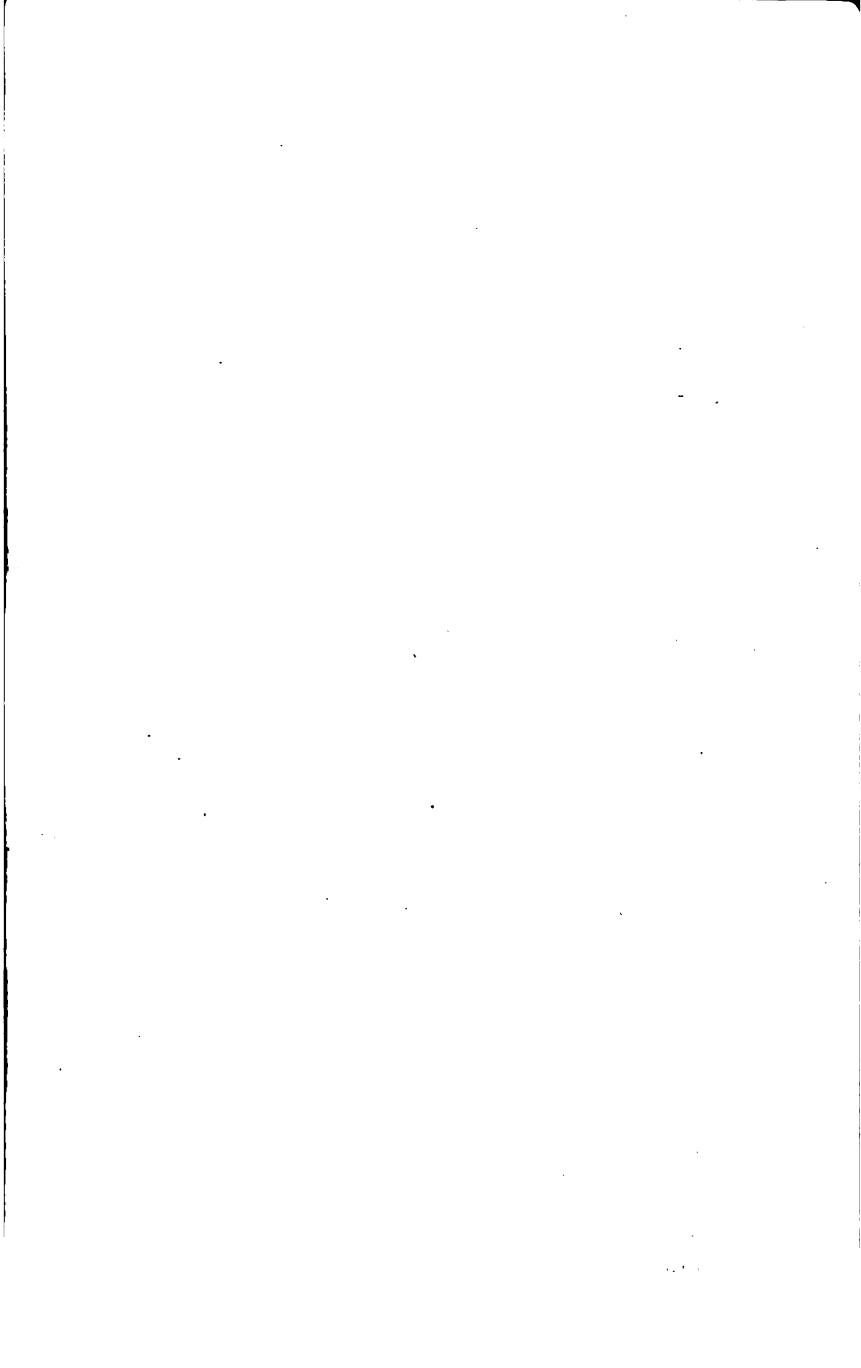
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